Commentary
March 2001

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March 2001

Letters from Readers

Intifada

To the Editor:

While I do not disagree with the four essays by Norman Podhoretz, Daniel Pipes, Hillel Halkin, and Efraim Karsh on the current situation in Israel ["Intifada II," December 2000], I do quibble with the underlying assumption that the al-Aqsa *intifada* succeeded in radically altering the perceptions of the Israeli public.

As one might expect, the renewal of wide-scale Palestinian violence shocked many Israelis, and the response of the Barak government profoundly weakened the prime minister's public standing; but that does not tell the whole story. In a Gallup/*Ma'ariv* poll conducted in December, Israelis were asked whether Barak, having resigned as prime minister, had a mandate to make a deal with Arafat during the period leading up to the February 2001 election. According to the poll, the country was split, with 46 percent believing Barak would still have a mandate and 47 percent believing he would not. Similarly, 59 percent were in favor or leaning in favor of a referendum based on a "permanent peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians," with a near majority preferring such an agreement, "including compromises over Jerusalem and a declaration ending the conflict with the Palestinians," to an interim agreement. On the flip side, 56 percent said there was not "a partner for peace on the Palestinian side."

One is tempted to disregard such polls, particularly in light of the fluidity of events on the ground. But there can be little doubt that Israeli public opinion has continued to be schizophrenic about the peace process. While skeptical of Palestinian intentions, a majority of Israelis still hunger for a permanent agreement and remain unwilling to entertain the bitter (if more sober) alternatives. It is this political reality that drove Barak forward and that had bent his predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu, however reluctantly, in the same direction.

Until the Israeli public gives its politicians a mandate to resist—however long and hard the road may be—more concessions will surely follow.

Gary M. Osen
Oradell, New Jersey

To the Editor:

Your excellent essays omit one major factor that is responsible for Israel's absurd willingness to give up land in exchange for vague promises from sworn enemies. The problem is not, as some of the essayists claim, that a good part of the population has become weary and demoralized, or has bought into the peace process. Rather, Israel has become the victim of its own secularism. Having been taught for a generation that the Bible is not sacred but is simply a source book for archaeological digs, that the land is not holy, that Jewish history and Jewish destiny are without special meaning, and that the prophets of Israel were merely good poets, Israelis have inevitably come to possess no serious attachment to the land and to have no qualms about giving it away.

Israel's indifference to the Arab destruction of Joseph's Tomb, its willingness to trade away Rachel's Tomb, and the cavalier treatment of Judaism's holiest site—the Temple Mount—are all traceable to a secular indoctrination that has emptied Israel of Jewish pride and self-respect. After all, why concern oneself with a Jewish history that goes no further back than Theodor Herzl?

It is no coincidence that the only groups in Israel that are still fully conscious of their heritage and that have not lost their spirit and courage are precisely those groups that have not been secularized, and for whom

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[RABBI] EMANUEL FELDMAN
Editor
Tradition
Jerusalem, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

The four depressing articles in "Intifada II" suggest that the crisis facing Israel is self-inflicted and largely psychological. This certainly seems to be the case. No other people would allow an uprising like this to go on without crushing it. Would the United States tolerate, even for one day, known terrorists operating within its borders, smashing up religious shrines, shooting into apartment buildings, stoning and firebombing cars on the roads, blowing up school buses, or kidnapping, torturing, and then butchering soldiers?

Israel's weak leaders might have looked to the late King Hussein of Jordan to learn how to deal with an *intifada*. In 1970 Yasir Arafat tried out a similar terrorist campaign in Jordan. King Hussein immediately ordered his army to defeat Arafat's forces; 5,000 were shot down in what is now mourned by Palestinian Arabs as "Black September." King Hussein saved his country and received the respect of the entire world.

GEORGE E. RUBIN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

The authors of the articles in "Intifada II" seem to argue that Israel's own actions are responsible for its current situation. Nowhere are there references to outside pressure from the U.S. or Europe. But, although Israel may have been at fault at Oslo and perhaps even until recently, certainly its current travail is to a great degree the result of external influences. Note the vote of fourteen to zero at the UN condemning Israel's use of violence against the Palestinians, criticism from the U.S. for responding to Arab attacks, and thunder in the European press for Israel's role in the deaths of Arab children.

Daniel Pipes wants the U.S. to help Israel out of its fix by providing military and diplomatic support—because, he argues, it is in America's interest to do so. But what is the U.S. likely to do if confronted with a choice between its support for Israel and its oil supply?

MORRIS ALTSCHULER
Rockville, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR:

As an eighty-six-year-old man who lived through a narrow escape from the Nazis but whose family perished in Auschwitz, I cannot believe that I am now witnessing in Israel a repetition of the treacherous appeasement that took place in the months leading up to World War II. Just as the Western powers of Europe thought they could ensure the peace by signing a treaty with Hitler and the Nazis, Ehud Barak pursued utopian illusions of peace with Yasir Arafat and the Arab leaders.

These illusions were only encouraged by the interference and pressure of the U.S. in favor of Israel's aggressors. After World War II, the allies forced Germany to cede a significant part of its Eastern provinces to Poland; France recovered the province of Alsace; and all of the German inhabitants of the Sudetenland had to leave. By contrast, after Israel was victorious in the Six-Day war with Egypt, it was coerced into giving back the Sinai up to the last grain of sand. Not only have the Arabs escaped punishment, the United States now continues to supply Egypt with armaments.

ERNEST SCHWARCZ
Mountain View, California

TO THE EDITOR:

The essays in "Intifada II" are reasoned indictments of terrible deeds done to the people of Israel. There is no gainsaying the facts or the conclusions drawn from them. But these accounts will make no difference.

We have in the Middle East an object lesson in how otherwise decent people allowed the slaughter of Jews in Germany. Everyone wishes to be reasonable; no one wishes to be regarded as an extremist. But in this case, as in the case of Germany, a solution will require force beyond any yet seen in the Middle East. I hope, but doubt, that the American military is already planning for it.

ED HAEFELE
Alliance, Nebraska

TO THE EDITOR:

The articles by Norman Podhoretz, Daniel Pipes, Hillel Halkin, and Efraim Karsh are very pessimistic indeed; even so, they understate the threat that faces Israel. Israel's enemies include not only Palestinians and Arabs but Muslims all over the world and American politicians on the far Left and far Right, like Ralph Nader and Patrick Buchanan. Israel is small and unimportant, but it is the most hated country on earth.

GEORGE JOCHNOWITZ
College of Staten Island
Staten Island, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

I much admire Norman Podhoretz's analysis of the dire situation in which Israel finds itself. His description of Oslo and its not-so-slow undermining of Israel's territorial integrity is unfortunately right on the mark. But how does Mr. Podhoretz then account for his relatively upbeat conclusion?

To assert, as he does, that "present circumstances will not last forever" is a given. Nothing lasts forever. But an "unexpected surprise," in which the Arabs will acknowledge Israel as a sovereign state, is about as likely as the moon falling on Alabama.

If there is no solution, then so be it. Perhaps miracles do happen, but it would be far better to reaffirm the legitimacy of Israel and whatever boundaries the majority of Israelis decide upon and to say, as Luther did, "Here stand I. I can do no other," than to dream of a change of heart among the enemy.

JUDITH HIRSCH
Boca Raton, Florida

TO THE EDITOR:

Norman Podhoretz correctly observes that almost everyone in the world took at face value the Palestinian Authority's version of the 1996 events regarding the Western Wall tunnel—that is, that it was supposedly intended by Israel to undermine the foundations of the al-Aqsa Mosque—when even a cursory glance would have shown that the allegation was blatantly false. Worse, however, is the fact that Israelis themselves are now spreading the Palestinians' propaganda.

In an article that appeared in September in the *International Herald Tribune*,

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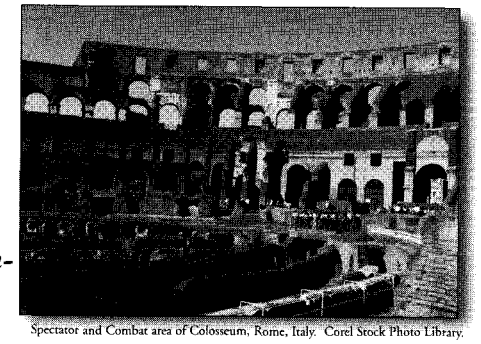

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Garrett G. Fagan (Ph.D., McMaster University, 1993) is associate professor of history at the Pennsylvania State University in State College. A native of Dublin, Ireland, he eared his bachelor's and master's degrees at Trinity College, Dublin, and was a Killam Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of British Columbia. Before joining the faculty at Penn State, he held teaching posts at McMaster University and York University in Canada, and at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill and Davidson College. Students at every institution consistently offered high praise for his courses in ancient history.

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Uri Dromi, the former director of the Israeli government press office, wrote that "[Netanyahu] started his term by inciting a bloodbath when he opened the tunnel under the Temple Mount, resulting in the death of dozens of Israelis and Palestinians." It is scandalous that Dromi does not know where the Western Wall tunnel is. Not only is the tunnel adjacent to the Temple Mount and not under it, but the controversial northern gate is in fact 500 yards away from the walls of the mosque.

MLADEN ANDRIJASEVIC
Beer Sheva, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

In his contribution to "Intifada II," Daniel Pipes writes that the Oslo agreement "paid off economically: the boom experienced by Israel in the 1990's can be partly attributed to a greater global willingness to trade and invest in the country." While it is impossible to know whether or how much of Israel's economic growth can be attributed to improved international sentiment, the boom itself has been greatly exaggerated by cheerleaders for the peace process.

Between 1991 and 1999 the Israeli economy grew, on average, 4.7 percent annually in real terms. This is certainly spectacular, especially when compared to the 3.6 percent average growth in the American economy over the same period. But if we focus just on the post-Oslo period from 1994 to 1999, the Israeli economy in those years grew at an average of only 1.8 percent, as compared to 2.9 percent in the U.S.

The roots of whatever growth has occurred in the Israeli economy can be found in the economic stabilization plans put into place by the Likud-Labor government in the mid-1980's, the massive influx of Russian immigrants, and the valiant struggle by the Bank of Israel to reduce inflation. The economic effects of the peace process were marginal at best, and should not be used as a justification of that policy.

JOSIAH ROTENBERG
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Of all people, Jews ought to understand the desires of indigenous Arabs and Palestinians to maintain their own community of interests and symbols in the face of threats by a dominant power.

Modern scholarship has found solid reasons for understanding the biblical stories of David and Solomon as something other than literal historiography. What we know about the demographics and economics of the Iron Age precludes the possibility that a Davidic kingdom from the Nile to the Euphrates existed circa 1000 B.C.E., or that a temple of the size and grandeur attributed to King Solomon could have graced the humble City of David.

But this scholarship does not negate the existence and importance of the Second Temple in the history of Jerusalem, and it would be self-defeating for any Arab leader or Muslim believer to pretend otherwise. Similarly, Jews and Christians should not minimize the importance of the al-Aqsa Mosque, which has been in place on the Temple Mount for nearly twice the 600-year duration of the revered Second Temple of the Jews.

Third-Temple Jewish militancy, millennialist Christian fanaticism, and Islamic jihad are three equally provocative affronts to everything that the genuine deity represents within the world's extended monotheistic family. Martyrdom is a tradition that we could now do well without. May God bless us all if we can only get this lesson through our irrationally nationalist and/or religious heads.

BOB GARNER
Bozeman, Montana

TO THE EDITOR:

COMMENTARY merits congratulations for the fine essays in "Intifada II." It is time that Arab and Palestinian university professors, artists, intellectuals, musicians, writers, journalists, and trade-union leaders issued a statement acknowledging the legitimacy of the state of Israel. Like their Israeli counterparts—A.B. Yehoshua, David Grossman, Tom Segev, Shlomo Avineri, Uri Avnery, Amos Oz, Ady Ophir, Dany Rubinstein—they too must publicly ask for peace.

BARUCH COHEN
Canadian Institute for Jewish Research
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

TO THE EDITOR:

May I express my thanks for the outstanding series of essays in "Intifada II." I am a Jewish educator and have asked my students to read them in order to understand the sad events now occurring in Israel. I am grateful to you for consistently providing your readers with articles of such importance.

PATTI MOSKOVITZ
Foster City, California

NORMAN PODHORETZ writes:

Gary M. Osen may well be right about Israeli public opinion, and Emanuel Feldman may have put his finger on one of the reasons for the stubborn delusion that peace is possible under current conditions. But in my judgment, the factor Rabbi Feldman cites is only one of many, and not necessarily the most important.

Surely George E. Rubin has a point, though the late King Hussein is hardly a model for the Israelis to follow, assuming even that they had the stomach to follow it (which I very much doubt). This is why I disagree with Morris Altschuler about the relative weights of external and internal pressures. The truth is that since Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres decided (on the grounds that I tried to describe in my article) to go forward with Oslo, Israel has been making concessions that no American administration—not even the Bush-Baker team, which was perhaps the most hostile of any since the days of John Foster Dulles—would have dared to demand, or ever did. From that point on, it has been successive Israeli governments that have taken the lead, not Washington. True, Bill Clinton did some pushing, but his mad race to the finish line was preceded, and given a strong tail wind, by the unprecedented concessions Ehud Barak had already offered at his own initiative.

That this bears a terrifying resemblance to the policies of appeasement recalled by Ernest Schwarcz is as obvious as it is—to me—incomprehensible. For Jews, of all people, to buy into such policies so short a period after the most dramatic demonstration imaginable of their inevitable consequences, is something

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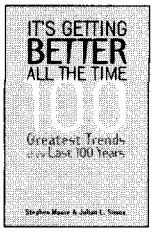

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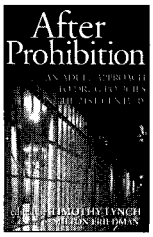

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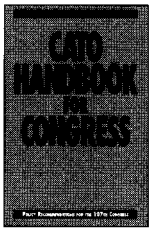

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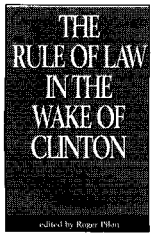

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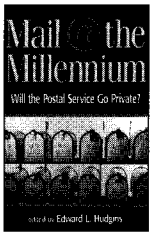

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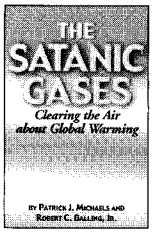

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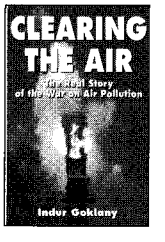

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that, when all is said and done, I find almost impossible to understand. Therefore, while Ed Haefele is worried about whether the American military is ready for the big war (as distinguished from the low-intensity conflict going on now) that both he and I expect to break out one of these days, I am more worried about whether the *Israeli* military is ready.

Why then, asks Judith Hirsch very reasonably, did I reach a "relatively upbeat" conclusion in my article? The answer is that, while agreeing with every word she writes, I cannot, after having living through the sudden demise of the Soviet Union, preclude the possibility of some analogous "miracle" occurring in the Arab world. But the last implication I would wish to be drawn from this position is that Israel should wait around passively for the necessary changes, let alone that it should go on pursuing a delusory peace. As to the strategy Judith Hirsch proposes—which amounts to a form of "separation"—I said in my article that I doubted its viability, and to my own regret (since it seems no less attractive to me than it does to so many Israelis), I still entertain the same skepticism.

But, alas—in view of the evidence cited by Gary Osen—I am more skeptical than I was about the willingness of Israelis in their present condition to stand up for themselves in the war of ideas. Mladen Andrijasevic gives us one example, and there are now Israelis who join with Bob Garner in lending credence to the latest turn in Palestinian propaganda, which is to deny that there ever was a Temple on the Temple Mount. Mr. Garner, while peddling spurious "scholarship" about the First Temple, at least accepts the existence of the Second Temple, but Arafat and his minions and fellow-travelers (some of them Israelis, and others American or English Jews) even dispute that. And the Palestinians have done everything in their power to make sure that no further archaeological evidence of Solomon's Temple will be unearthed.

Be that as it may, Mr. Garner is very much mistaken in the moral equivalence he draws among Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Neither "Jewish militancy" nor "Christian fanaticism" is responsible for the war against Israel that the Arab world has been conducting since the state came into existence, and that it continues to conduct by a combination of military and political tactics. Would that one could say the same about "Islamic jihad."

DANIEL PIPES writes:

I agree with Gary M. Osen that the violence that began in September did not seem radically to alter the perceptions of the Israeli public. Although I did not address this matter in my COMMENTARY article, I did make precisely Mr. Osen's point in a *Jerusalem Post* column (October 25, 2000) titled "Oslo's Nine Lives."

Emanuel Feldman argues that Israel's problem is not that "a good part of the population has become weary and demoralized, or has bought into the peace process. Rather, Israel has become the victim of its own secularism." But these are hardly contrary points: as Rabbi Feldman himself goes on to suggest, one among many reasons for Israel's weariness and demoralization may be its secularism.

George E. Rubin's suggestion that Israel learn from King Hussein's actions in September 1970 is not realistic; there is no way that democratic Israel, always the focus of world attention, could or should employ the brutal methods of the Jordanian armed forces back then. So brutal were those methods, indeed, that when more than 200 PLO fighters escaped Jordanian forces by crossing into the West Bank, they willingly surrendered to the Israelis.

Although Morris Altschuler chides all four authors in "Intifada II" for failing to refer to pressure from the United States or Europe, this was the premise of my entire article. Nevertheless, one must be fair. It is true that the Clinton administration encouraged policies that another correspondent, Ernest Schwarcz, likens to "the treacherous appeasement" of Great Britain and France in the 1930's. But in my judgment the ultimate responsibility for these policies lies with Israel's demoralized electorate. As for Mr. Altschuler's question about what the U.S. government would do if faced with a choice between its support for Israel and its oil supply, one need only think back 27 years to when the Arab oil boycott put tremendous pressure on Washington to abandon Israel, and it did not do so.

Josiah Rotenberg holds that Israel's economic boom "has been greatly exaggerated by cheerleaders for the peace process." I agree. That is why I wrote only that Israel's economic success could be "partly" attributed to its diplomacy.

HILLEL HALKIN writes:

Most of the readers responding to "Intifada II" seem to be in basic agreement with what its authors were arguing in their different ways. Writing from Israel at the end of January, I would only observe that, with the polls showing Ehud Barak about to be soundly beaten in his electoral contest with Ariel Sharon, the Israeli public *has* seemed ready to give its politicians what Gary M. Osen calls a "mandate to resist" the irrational and self-destructive concessions made by the Barak government to the Palestinians. Although Emanuel Feldman is certainly right that religiously traditional Israelis have shown, in recent months and years, more backbone than have many secular Israelis, the February elections will have demonstrated, I believe, that "Jewish pride and self-respect" are not lacking among a large number of secular Israelis as well.

Like the Rabin-Peres government that went to Oslo, the Barak government inflicted grave and perhaps irreparable damage upon Israel and upon its ability to stand up to an Arab world that still does not accept its existence. It will not be easy for any new government to undo that damage. The road back to a credible policy of defending Jewish and Israeli interests, and convincing the Arabs and the world that these will not be forfeited, will demand years of determination and possibly bloodshed, for which the Barak government will bear much of the responsibility. We can only hope that Israel's new leaders will prove equal to the task.

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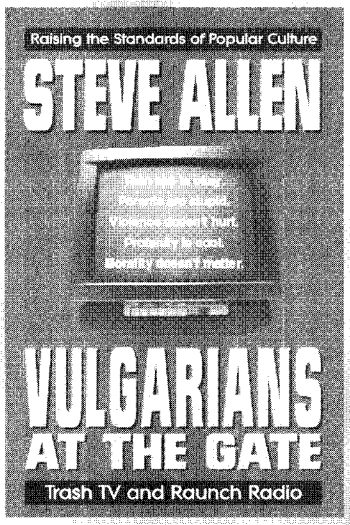

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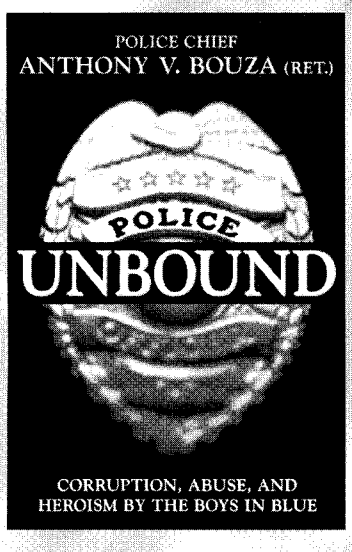

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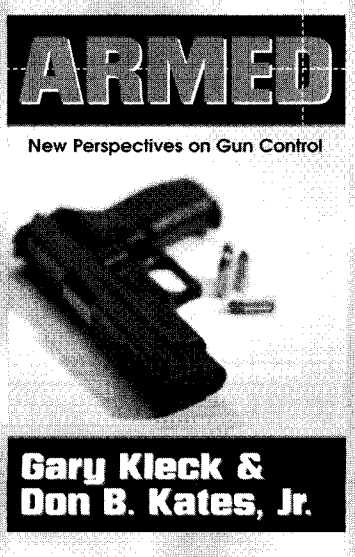

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EFRAIM KARSH writes:

George Jochnowitz is concerned that COMMENTARY's authors may be understating the threat that faces Israel. Although I hardly think that is the case, it is true that, in the world at large, there is a general tendency to downplay the degree to which Israel is indeed, to use Mr. Jochnowitz's word, hated. That is precisely why, in underscoring the intractability of the Arab-Israeli conflict, I sought to highlight a central albeit often overlooked source of Muslim-Arab rejection of the Jewish state, namely, millenarian anti-Semitism.

Israel is widely perceived as an implacable enemy of Islam with whom there can be no real peace. This point was made by Yasir Arafat as early as 1994, when he compared the Oslo Accords to the Treaty of Hudaybiya, signed by the Prophet Muhammad with the people of Mecca in 628 C.E., only to be discarded two years later when the prophet's political fortunes improved. It has most recently been amplified by the categorical Arab and Muslim rejection of the sanctity, for Jews, of the Temple Mount, including the Western Wall, and the uncompromising insistence on full control of these sites.

No less detrimental to the prospects for peace has been the historic Arab-Muslim dismissal of the notion of Jewish peoplehood, and continued adherence to the Islamic perception of Jews as a tolerated, if distinctly inferior, religious community living at the sufferance of the Muslim sovereign. Hence the Palestinian insistence on a "right of return" to territories that are now part of Israel, with a view to creating an Arab-dominated state in which Jews would constitute a minority. In the recent words of Edward Said: "The Jews are a minority everywhere. They are a minority in the United States. Surely they can live as a minority in the Middle East, in Israel."

What makes the situation all the more disturbing, as Gary M. Osen aptly notes, is the reluctance of many Israelis themselves to acknowledge this stark reality. Fatigued by decades of fighting, and yearning for a normalcy that would allow them to enjoy their recently won affluence, the majority of Israelis embraced the Oslo Accords as a panacea. As a result, the peace process became a one-way street, in which Israel progressively relinquished control over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip while the Palestinians, failing to meet a single commitment undertaken under Oslo, systematically indoctrinated their young with a burning hatred for Jews and Israel, refused to abrogate clauses in the Palestinian National Covenant calling for Israel's destruction, sanctioned and at times organized terrorist attacks against Israel, and in the end resorted to wholesale violence.

And yet, despite the writing on the wall, successive Israeli governments turned a blind eye. This exercise in national self-delusion reached its peak during Ehud Barak's brief term in office. Not only was he prepared to negotiate with the Palestinians while they were actively subverting the very basis of the process on which these negotiations were predicated, but the more audacious the Palestinian aggression, the greater Barak's concessions.

And so, while the official Palestinian newspaper *al-Hayat al-Jadida* was telling its readers how Israeli policies were guided by the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, we had the spectacle of senior Israeli ministers still meeting with their Palestinian counterparts in the Egyptian resort of Taba to ask what further Israeli concessions might be required in order to reach a "comprehensive" agreement for "peace."

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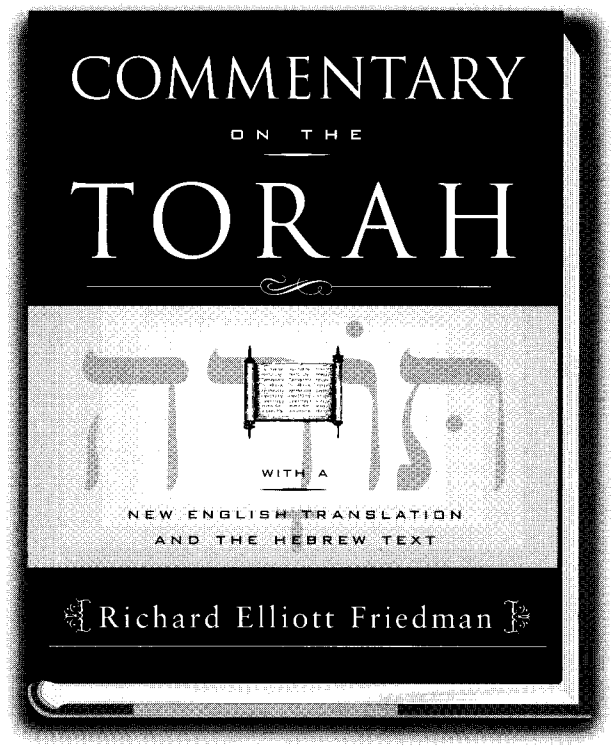

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Inside Baseball

TO THE EDITOR:

In "Where'd He Go, Joe DiMaggio?," [January] Joseph Epstein misstates DiMaggio's statistics for 1949, a noteworthy season for both DiMaggio and the entire Yankee team. It was the first year that Casey Stengel managed the team, and it saw the first of five consecutive world championships. As Mr. Epstein (perhaps misled by Richard Ben Cramer) would have it, 1949 was also the year DiMaggio compiled a league-leading 39 home runs while playing in all but one game. But this would have been impossible, since DiMaggio missed every game from opening day through the first two weeks of June because of painful bone spurs on his heels. These eventually forced him into retirement two years later at age thirty-six. The 39 homers and other numbers he put on the board must have been in 1948 or earlier.

STEVEN J. STEIN
Greenwich, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR:

I write to correct Joseph Epstein's error about Joe DiMaggio. Having attended the game in which DiMaggio's streak was ended almost 60 years ago (what Stephen Jay Gould called "the streak of streaks"), I can attest that the pitcher was Jim Bagby, Jr., not Al Smith, a teammate. This kind of gaffe, as Mr. Epstein must know, is well nigh unforgivable.

HAROLD TICKTIN
Shaker Heights, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR:

Joseph Epstein is suffering from a bad case of hero worship. He believes that Joe DiMaggio deserves credit because he despised Bill Clinton, Frank Sinatra, and the Kennedy brothers. But none of these men beat their wives or abandoned their children.

ROSE BRESSLER
Elkins Park, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR:

Having read both *DiMaggio: The Hero's Life* and Joseph Epstein's article about it, I believe that Mr. Epstein summarizes the book accurately: DiMaggio was, the author Richard Ben Cramer tells us, a remarkably talented and successful baseball player, and, in his private life, largely a jerk, though hardly the worst jerk that the world, or even organized sport, has ever seen. The likes of Dennis Rodman and Babe Ruth, for instance, have set the bar much higher, or lower, depending on how you look at it.

Mr. Epstein does not disagree with Cramer's assessment, but he seems angry that Cramer apparently considers himself a better person than DiMaggio. This may or may not be true—I do not know whether Cramer, say, has a wife, much less whether he kisses her or beats her when he comes home, and Mr. Epstein, thankfully, does not enlighten us on the subject—but the author's personal life is hardly relevant to the quality of the biography.

JOEL ROSENBERG
Minneapolis, Minnesota

TO THE EDITOR:

Since neither Richard Ben Cramer nor Joseph Epstein affords us a glimpse of DiMaggio as a man of letters, I offer the following anecdote. Some years ago, when the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association was held in a San Francisco hotel, a colleague of mine, a Bronx native and lifelong Yankees fan, spotted the great man in the lobby and took the liberty of introducing himself. DiMaggio was glad to be recognized and was very gracious. He did, however, want to know what MLA stood for. "Modern Language Association," he was told. "Modern languages?" replied DiMaggio. "What the hell's wrong with the old languages?"

EDWARD ALEXANDER
Seattle, Washington

TO THE EDITOR:

Who would have thought that an inveterate Brooklyn fan like me could ever have praised the chief architect of those damnable Yankee victories against the Dodgers? In 1947, as a boy of ten, I first saw Joe DiMaggio cover the open pastures of cavernous Yankee Stadium.

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Indelibly etched in my mind is the image of him moving at the crack of the bat and loping like a gazelle to a rendezvous with the white sphere. And his own graceful, effortless swing! No other batting stance was so copied by young boys of that and subsequent eras. Despite serious injuries, DiMaggio could do it all and make everything look easy.

Joseph Epstein's splendid review of *DiMaggio: The Hero's Life* captures the essence of a great man of sport whose very presence electrified those around him.

VINCENT CHIARELLO
Reston, Virginia

JOSEPH EPSTEIN writes:

Baseball statistics, unlike those in social science and political polling, are serious. Because they are, I am all the more ashamed of having gotten Joe DiMaggio's 1949 season wrong, as Steven J. Stein, in a kindly correction, surmises. The astonishing statistics I cited—39 homers, 155 RBI's, a batting average of .320—were in fact for the year 1948.

Having made this egregious error, I am in no position to turn my machine gun on Harold Ticktin's correction, even though it is only partially accurate. On the night Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak ended in Cleveland—July 14, 1941—he faced two pitchers. Al Smith, the Indians' starter, got him out three times; Jim Bagby, the reliever, faced DiMaggio only once, in the eighth inning, and got him on a hard, tricky-hop grounder to shortstop Lou Boudreau, who turned a tough out into a double-play, thus ending the great streak. On this question, then, neither one of us is completely wrong, which is not a bad way for a friendly dispute to end.

I would like to assure Rose Bressler that I am against wife-beating. (A courageous stand to take, but there, I've done it.) But she stretches things considerably when she says that DiMaggio "abandoned" his son; I think he did the best he could as a father under rough conditions. She is correct, though, in saying that I like his choice of enemies. I would only add that this is not for political reasons: like DiMaggio, though without his personal experience, I find Frank Sinatra, John and Robert Kennedy, and Bill Clinton to be genuine and deep creeps.

Joel Rosenberg should understand that I too know nothing about Richard Ben Cramer's personal life; nor am I interested in learning anything about it. My complaint about the moral standard of his book is that few if any of us are good enough to have lived up to it. Had I been a young man in DiMaggio's place, I know I could not have.

I thank Edward Alexander for his amusing anecdote, which, qualifying as it does as fine lore, I consider a contribution to U.S. history as well. Thanks also to Vincent Chiarello for his picture of Joe DiMaggio as a loping gazelle on a rendezvous with a white sphere. Sweet.

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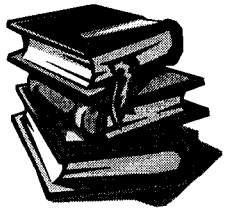

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Proust & the Jews

TO THE EDITOR:

Algis Valiunas ["Proust's Way," December 2000] seems determined to view Proust as a weak-minded social snob who somehow turned into a genius. He seems particularly annoyed with a letter Proust sent to his aging literary mentor, the Comte Robert de Montesquiou (the chief model for the decadent Baron de Charlus in *In Search of Lost Time*), who had made anti-Semitic remarks in the young writer's presence. In this letter, Proust let Montesquiou know that though he and his brother were Catholics, their mother was Jewish, and any future remarks of a similar nature would be considered wounding.

Mr. Valiunas, ignoring Proust's famous habit of "Proustifying" (without which we would have no *In Search of Lost Time*), wants him to be a slam-bang confronter, 21st-century style: "Proust's tacit fear," he writes, "was that if he defended the Jews he would be taken for a Jew, and what he wanted above all was to be thought of as a Christian gentleman. . . . Proust was only as forthright as his social cowardice—his fear of sacrificing his respectability—would allow."

But respectability was never Proust's problem—his father was the top doctor in France, his mother's uncle was Adolphe Crémieux, president of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* and lifetime senator in the French government. Nor were his ambitions so mundane as wanting to be thought a "Christian gentleman." In *The Guermantes Way*, he wrote:

> There were in this café . . . men of real intellectual and moral worth, of profound sensibility. They repelled—the Jews among them, principally the unassimilated Jews—those who could not endure any oddity or eccentricity of appearance. . . . Among the Jews especially there were few whose parents and kinsfolk had not a warmth of heart, a breadth of mind, a sincerity in comparison with which Saint-Loup's mother and the Duc de Guermantes cut the poorest of moral figures by their aridity, their skin-deep religiosity which denounced only the most open scandal, their apology for a Christianity which led invariably . . . to a colossally mercenary marriage.

In short, Proust was not the timid half-Jew fearfully living in an alien Christian society that Mr. Valiunas depicts. His most intimate world very much included Jews and half-Jews—his lover Reynaldo Hahn, the Bizet family, Madame Strauss, Léon Blum and his brother René, the Halévy brothers, and the Sidney Schiffs. The prestigious *La Revue Blanche*, to which he contributed, was started by Thadée

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Natanson and his brother, the sons of a Polish Jewish businessman.

When it comes to the Dreyfus case, to which Proust gave many years of his life, Mr. Valiunas makes it sound as though he was simply boasting when he said he was the first Dreyfusard. When Proust persuaded Anatole France to sign a petition to free Emile Zola (who had been imprisoned for writing in support of Dreyfus), France commented that this action risked getting them all thrown into prison along with Zola. Proust's quick move in securing France's signature produced immediate results, and thousands of signatures from the Sorbonne. It helped turn the tide for Zola and for Dreyfus. Proust also insisted that his doctor-father use his pull with the French government to intervene on behalf of Dreyfus's health. Why deny him the role he played?

Finally, according to Mr. Valiunas, the reason Proust did not correct "an anti-Semitic newspaper," which had referred to him as one of the "young Jewish writers" who defied decency, was his fear of calling attention to himself. Here and elsewhere Mr. Valiunas bases himself on the recent biography by William C. Carter, who seems to think that Proust did not understand much about politics. Yet Proust's voluminous correspondence indicates he had a keen political sense. He well understood the threat to France posed by the propaganda of the radical Right and in particular by the anti-Semitic ravings of *La Libre Parole*, which was not just any newspaper. He would therefore never have given its editors the satisfaction of pointing out that he was a baptized Catholic.

Albert Camus, like Proust the offspring of a double heritage, got it right when he observed that Proust desperately needed to unify the universe. With every breath in his being, Proust in his great novel obsessively entwines Jew and Christian. *In Search of Lost Time* contains eleven references to Queen Esther—the all-time exemplar of successful intermarriage! He dares not see these religions as separate entities if he is to maintain his bond with his mother. The Dreyfus Affair provided Proust with an engine and vocabulary for externalizing that bond, just as John Ruskin's theories on art afforded him, ever the mediator, a non-theological bridge to the Catholic churches of his childhood.

BARBARA PROBST SOLOMON
New York City

ALGIS VALIUNAS writes:

Barbara Probst Solomon seems determined to complicate what is simple and to simplify what is complicated. She writes that I portray Proust "as a weak-minded social snob who somehow turned into a genius." Actually, I think that Proust was anything but weak-minded. However, he was certainly weak-kneed—and why should such weakness be somehow antithetical to literary genius? Proust is hardly the only writer of distinction to have been a colossus when sitting alone at his desk and a less imposing creature, even on occasion a moral dwarf, when he poked his nose out into the world.

The letter Proust sent to Montesquiou does seriously annoy me, and so does what Barbara Probst Sol-

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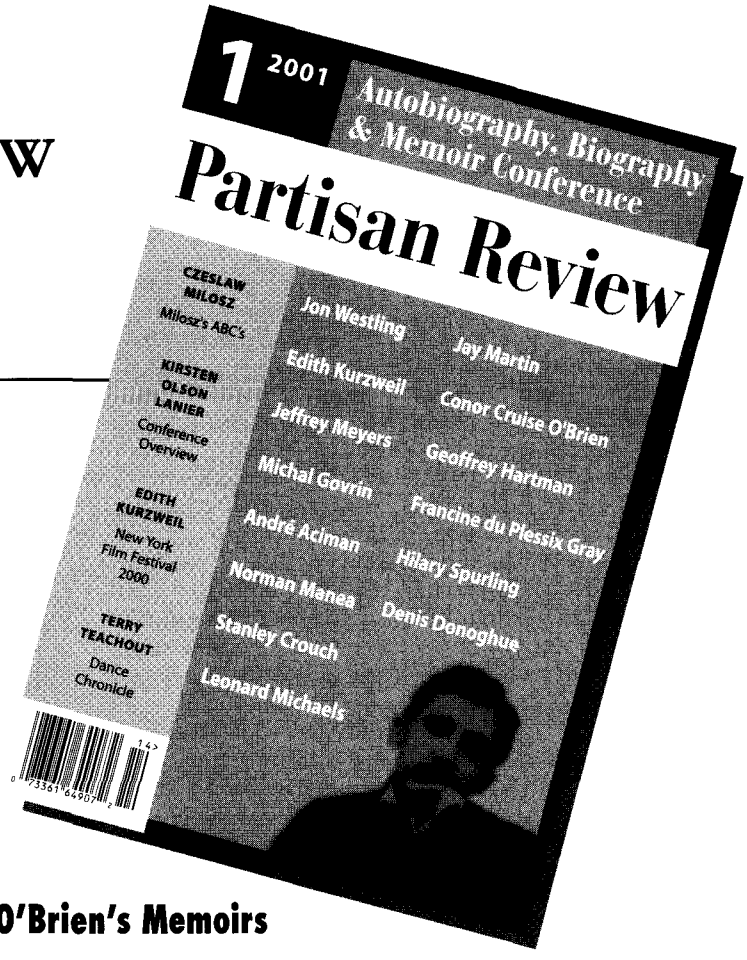

In the Coming Issue:

Millicent Bell on John Updike

Robert Wistrich's "Nietzsche: Godfather of Fascism?"

Paul Hollander on *The Black Book of Communism*

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omon has to say about it. In referring to Montesquiou as Proust's "aging literary mentor," she implies that Proust's reticence was a mark of understandable, even admirable delicacy; in fact, Montesquiou was forty years old at the time, and, although fast living does take its toll, he was not in any evident danger of stroking out at a display of *impolitesse* from his young acolyte. As for Proust's "Proustifying": when he observed to Montesquiou that, since his mother was Jewish, he was "not free to have the ideas I might otherwise have on the subject," it is clear to me that Proust could not even bring himself to tell Montesquiou that he was wrong about those Jews of his; if it were not for his mother, in other words, Proust might have regarded Jews as Montesquiou did.

Proust saw, as my correspondent does not, that however distinguished or well-connected his father might be, the son of a Jewish mother enjoyed his respectability on sufferance: one slip, and the social position Proust so cherished could be compromised, or gone. A gentleman honored his mother, but a Christian gentleman did not fuss when another Christian gentleman maligned his mother's unfortunate lineage. True as it is that Jews had a place in French high society, and that Proust had good Jewish friends, he was nevertheless anxious about losing his position in a predominantly Christian world.

The passage from *The Guermantes Way* that speaks well of Jews and disesteems anti-Semites and Christian hypocrites is hardly unknown to me. Far from denying that Proust boldly attacks anti-Semitism, I stated plainly that anti-Semitism "is everywhere in Proust's novel," and I showed that Frenchmen of the highest social standing are some of the most repellent transgressors. But I also mentioned that Proust dedicated *The Guermantes Way* to Léon Daudet, a writer friend of long standing who made a career of anti-Semitism. Proust worried about being in bad odor with the likes of Montesquiou and Daudet as they clearly did not worry about being in bad odor with him.

That Anatole France said Proust was risking his freedom by circulating a petition for Zola's sake, that Proust's brave alacrity was decisive in winning "immediate results," and that Proust pressed his father to help Dreyfus are all news to me. "Why deny him the role he played?" Barbara Probst Solomon asks. But that role is mentioned neither in the biographies by William C. Carter and Jean-Yves Tadié on which I based my essay nor in the other books on Proust that I consulted. Indeed, Tadié, the most venerable of Proust scholars, indicates clearly that Proust's December 1897 attempt to collect signatures for Zola's cause was far from a success, and it was only a month later that the course of events in the Dreyfus Affair gave new life to the petition drive. Although I would be happy to be instructed otherwise, it looks to me as if Proust is being given considerably more credit than he deserves.

Did Proust demand that his father exercise his clout on Dreyfus's behalf? Tadié and Carter say only that Dr. Proust refused to speak to either of his sons for a week after they signed a Dreyfusard petition. Tadié adds that it was precisely because Dr. Proust was so formidably respectable—he knew the government ministers and was a close friend of the president of France—that his sons' unseemly politics caused him such consternation. Even an eminent Christian doctor could not be too careful.

Why did Proust fail to inform the editors of *La Libre Parole* that he was not a Jew, as the anti-Semitic newspaper claimed he was? Following William C. Carter, I suggested the reason was his fear of being singled out for special attention. For this both Carter and I are chided, and Carter is called ignorant for thinking that Proust was a political innocent. But Carter's point is that Proust understood politics well enough to know he did not wish to place life and limb in peril. As Barbara Probst Solomon herself points out, these were threatening things Proust was dealing with, and he had good reason not to make himself an even more inviting target for thuggery.

Finally, that Proust "needed to unify the universe" is a suggestive notion, and one that arguably manifests itself in his teaching that goodness is to be loved wherever one may find it. But Proust also shows that goodness is extremely hard to come by, that the universe resists unification. Perversity and chauvinism are obdurate. Jews fall in love with Christians and Christians with Jews, but love does not erase the differences between them. Swann does not cease being Jewish, nor does he want to, because he marries Odette, or because he is the only Jew accepted in exclusive society; indeed, he feels the sting of anti-Semitism all the more sharply because it comes from people he considers friends. Although I find the sentiment expressed by Barbara Probst Solomon very appealing, I would not attribute it to Proust without serious qualification: it will only be realized, if at all, in another world, and Proust knew all too well how things work in this one.

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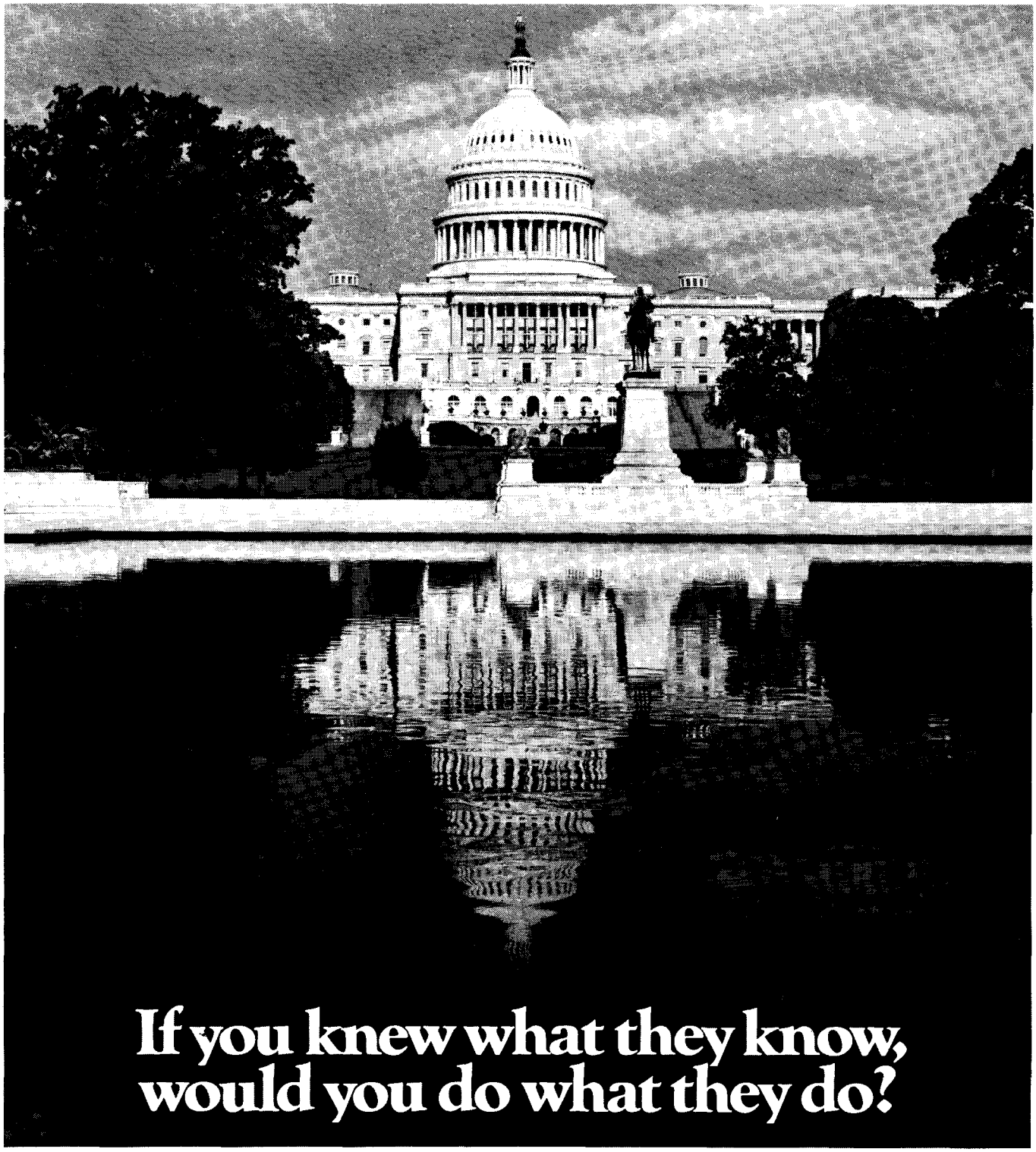

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Commentary
March 2001

Bush and the Republican Future

Daniel Casse

WEEKS BEFORE he took the oath of office, George W. Bush already seemed a man condemned to a presidency of limited expectations. Remarking on his apparent lack of any electoral mandate, the *Washington Post* columnist David Broder wrote that Bush was entering the Washington power struggle shorn of the strongest weapon any President could have in dealing with Congress—a healthy fear of defying his wishes. Concern about Bush's ability to lead was evident as well among those already disposed to approve of conservative Republican politicians, with Paul Gigot of the *Wall Street Journal* and David Brooks of the *Weekly Standard* both wondering aloud how Bush could ever govern effectively.

Such doubts seemed, and still seem, entirely understandable. As even his supporters would have to concede, Bush may have been the least-prepared candidate to assume the office of the presidency in the past century. Unlike Bill Clinton, who had been active in state politics for fifteen years, Bush served barely more than a single term in a state with one of the least powerful gubernatorial offices in the country. (The Texas legislature meets for only a few months every other year, and the governor lacks the power even to appoint members of his own cabinet.) In sharp contrast to his father, moreover, the younger Bush had no substantive experience in national politics or foreign affairs, had never held an appointed position in federal government, and boasted no prior history as a student of public policy. Unlike Reagan, Ford, Nixon, or Eisenhower, all of whom were established national figures when they assumed the presidency, Bush was virtually unknown to the public until two years before he announced his intention to run.

Of course, what Bush lacked in political experience he made up for in political pedigree, having served as adviser and sometime enforcer in his father's administration. But that hardly seemed to balance his shortcomings, so well chronicled by the press. In addition to the ones just named, these included the fact that he was persistently and embarrassingly inarticulate, that he had rarely traveled outside the U.S., that he seemed to have no deeply held views about government or burning mission to become President, and that his adult life appeared unburdened by any concern for the great policy questions of our age.

Aside from Bush's own lack of credentials and his questionable skills, there was also the fact that Republican strength in Congress had been eroding. Although Republicans did emerge from the November election with their majority in the House intact, the energy and boldness they once brought to that chamber had clearly diminished since their

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halcyon days after the 1994 mid-term elections. In the Senate, Republicans lost four seats to create an evenly divided chamber, and they now hold on to their majority status only through the tie-breaking vote of the Vice President. That majority, and the procedural power that comes with it, will vanish should either Strom Thurmond (a year short of his hundredth birthday) or Jesse Helms (seventy-nine and in poor health) die in office, since their replacements would be selected by the Democratic governors of their respective states.

In a sense, then, Bush's victory, itself won after a protracted legal process and devoid of any real sense of triumph, could be viewed as marking not the beginning of a new, post-Clinton era but as the last gasp of an earlier one—the era of muscular, confident, conservative Republicanism that first drew breath with the election of Ronald Reagan more than twenty years ago. And indeed it is no idle thought that, despite his win, the results of the recent election were actually an ominous sign for Republicans.

As described recently by Terry Teachout ("Republican Nation, Democratic Nation?," COMMENTARY, January), Bush captured a huge but also tightly defined swath of territory stretching from the Rocky Mountains, to the Midwest, and through the South, while Al Gore won virtually every major metropolitan, industrial, and suburban area. These latter are the redoubts of the growing class of "knowledge workers" in the new economy. In the opinion of some, the members of this new and rising class—"more affluent, educated, diverse, suburban, 'wired,' and 'moderate,'" to quote Al From, head of the centrist Democratic Leadership Council—will be the "dominant voters of the Information Age." Pointing especially to the voting patterns among women, John Judis warned in the *New Republic* that unless the GOP somehow manages to jettison the socially conservative base it gained during the 80's, Republicans "will increasingly be stuck on the losing side of the national political debate."

WHETHER ONE agrees with these specific predictions or not, there is no denying that the GOP has indeed become a party in decline. Many of the issues and conflicts that energized Republicans over the past twenty years have dissipated or disappeared altogether. Even more significantly, from the perspective of presidential politics, the electoral coalition that emerged at the end of the 1970's to sweep Ronald Reagan into office no longer exists in any meaningful form.

Two decades ago, that surprising alliance—of corporate Republicans, libertarians, religious conservatives, and foreign-policy hawks—shifted the political landscape and created a newly potent force in American politics. But it did not presage a permanent realignment. The Reagan coalition was the product of the historic circumstances that Reagan himself identified in his 1980 campaign: an expanding and aggressive Soviet Union, waning American confidence at home and abroad, insupportably high levels of taxation, and widespread distrust of the federal government.

That the Reagan coalition should eventually have fallen apart is thus hardly a mystery. The Soviet Union collapsed. Taxes were cut. Confidence returned. The federal budget was balanced. In time, the party's libertarians and cultural conservatives drifted off to pursue other, sometimes conflicting, political agendas.

Other blows, too, struck at the unity that Republicans had enjoyed for most of the 1980's. One of them was the rise of Patrick J. Buchanan. In the early 90's, Buchanan, a former Nixon speechwriter and Reagan adviser, emerged as an evangelist for economic and military isolationism; his success in the 1992 Republican primary in New Hampshire stunned the elder George Bush, whose hapless campaign for re-election never fully recovered. Although Buchanan would become both crankier and more irrelevant with each passing year, finally leaving the GOP altogether, he was early to grasp the fact that free trade and foreign military engagement—two of the bedrock principles of Reaganism—no longer commanded immediate support in Republican ranks. Despite the differences between the two men, Buchanan's anti-Washington and anti-free-trade sentiments opened the door to Ross Perot, the populist spoiler for the GOP in the presidential elections of 1992 and 1996.

The other outsized personality the GOP had to deal with in the 1990's was Newt Gingrich. As a strategist and inside warrior, and as a critic of the welfare state, Gingrich may have been the best and most articulate leader the modern Republican party has ever had. Without his organizing abilities, his rhetorical forays against the Democratic barons of Congress, and his Contract with America, it is unlikely the party could have achieved its majorities in both the House and Senate in 1994. But Gingrich turned out to be a much more myopic and flawed Speaker than his impassioned pursuit of the job would have led anyone to believe.

Once in the Speaker's office, Gingrich became obsessed by polling data. At the same time, paradoxically enough, he devoted boundless energy to legislative battles that failed to resonate with voters

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and were doomed to defeat. Though he did reform the rules of the House of Representatives, making it more open and accountable, he was much less effective in shaping and arguing for a national agenda. And in a period when Republicans needed to broaden their base of support, Gingrich's vituperative personality and displays of personal pique only antagonized the public.

Gingrich's 1995 confrontation with Clinton over shutting down the federal government during budget negotiations was a public-relations misstep that severely damaged voters' perception of the party. After 1998, spooked by their setbacks in the mid-term elections, the congressional Republicans became a cautious lot. While continuing to argue for many traditional GOP policies, they seemed to be without any clear set of policy goals, and concomitantly to have lost their ability to capture public enthusiasm.

Much of their problem was surely related to a rarely acknowledged fact: tax cuts, once the signature issue of the party, were no longer the galvanizing force they had earlier been. In 1993, the GOP did manage (with the help of moderate Democrats) to defeat Bill Clinton's first effort to raise both energy and income taxes. But Clinton's second crack at a stimulus package passed, thereby effectively dismantling the chief accomplishment of the supply-side revolution of the 1980's.

When Clinton signed the 1993 bill, some in the GOP saw it as tantamount to his signing his own death warrant. And indeed the tax increase, coupled with Clinton's failed attempt to create a centralized health-care system, undoubtedly contributed to the drubbing the Democrats received in the 1994 mid-term elections. But already by then tax cuts were losing their magic for Republicans.

The economy, fueled by the technology boom, was entering a period of unprecedented growth by the mid-90's, and its robustness seemed clearly to disprove Republican predictions that Clinton's tax increases would precipitate a recession. In short order, the Democrats recovered their confidence. Led by the White House, they successfully assaulted the tax cuts then being proposed by House Republicans—what Gingrich called the "crown jewel" of the Contract with America—as "reckless," "irresponsible," and "a giveaway to the wealthiest Americans." During the 1996 presidential campaign, Republican nominee Bob Dole's modest plan for a 15-percent, across-the-board income tax was predictably ridiculed by Democrats. Worse, it aroused barely a ripple of reaction among voters, and never came close to becoming a defining issue in the election.

As the decade drew to a close, although Republicans were still advocating tax cuts, the proposals being put forth were minimal. The party that only a few years earlier had dreamed of tearing up the federal tax code, creating a flat tax, and eliminating capital-gains taxes had retreated to a few incremental measures like eliminating the marriage tax and phasing out estate taxes.

Yet if tax cuts had lost their force as an issue, the party was also unable to come together on much else. Preparing to select a nominee for the 2000 election, the GOP could boast no internal consensus on how to reform Medicare or Social Security, and no single view on what to do with the growing federal budget surplus. Within the party, there were bitter divisions over foreign engagement and military spending. On abortion, trade, immigration, debt reduction, and antitrust policy, no unity was to be found.

THIS, THEN, was the background—a divided electorate, razor-thin majorities in Congress, and disarray in the ranks on what the party stood for—against which George W. Bush campaigned for and eventually entered office. To be sure, Bush seemed somewhat different from the sort of Republican that Washington had become used to over the last twenty years: in his inaugural address, for example, he would characteristically speak not of government, its size and scope, but of individuals and of the duties citizens owe one another. But even so, a plausible reading of his campaign oratory was that, as President, Bush would be a West Texas version of his father—an establishment Republican filled with the spirit of noblesse oblige who had promised his own version of "compassionate conservatism" and had turned out to be merely a diligent public servant with no clear sense of political mission.

All along, however, there were also grounds for thinking otherwise. As his campaign hinted, and as his first days and weeks in the White House would confirm, Bush's emphasis on aiding the poor, the disabled, and minorities not only differentiated him from other Republicans but formed the banner under which he advanced what were some truly bold ideas.

During the campaign, up to and including the Republican convention in Philadelphia, Bush's theme of "compassionate conservatism," while vague and occasionally tedious, served a clear strategic purpose: disassociating him in the public mind from either the confrontational stance of the Gingrich years or the more libertarian impulses of

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the Reagan era. It was no accident that the Republican officials most prominent in Washington—Trent Lott, Dick Armey, Tom DeLay—were kept at arm's length from Bush campaign headquarters in Austin, or that, at the convention in July, congressional leaders were conspicuous by their absence from the podium in prime time. In their place was a mostly new cast of Republican faces, all apparently selected to emphasize the racial, ethnic, and even ideological diversity of the party.

While the four days in Philadelphia often lapsed into sugarcoated self-parody, it was hard to argue with the results: in the weeks following the convention, Bush received high marks from the press and a "bounce" in the polls. In the words of Karlyn Bowman of the American Enterprise Institute, the "key to Bush's strength" was precisely his theme of compassionate conservatism, promoting an image of the Texas governor as a Republican whom voters could think of as "someone like me."

In the meantime, there was also much more to Bush's strategy than the desire to project an image of amiable, bipartisan bonhomie. Out of the campaign there flowed a whole series of thoughtful speeches and detailed policy proposals on the very topics on which the GOP was floundering. Bush's tax-reduction plan, proposing a cut in rates for every taxpayer, was far more ambitious than anything offered by the Republican majorities in either the House or Senate. His plan to allow Americans to invest part of their Social Security payroll taxes in private accounts was the most detailed attempt by any presidential candidate in history to reform a program long thought to be politically untouchable. In education and health care, Bush offered new ideas for transforming the federal role, relying more on competition and market forces and giving local governments far greater authority over policy. In foreign affairs, he vigorously advocated the idea of principled American engagement abroad and voiced unequivocal support for a national missile defense.

It was often remarked during the campaign, usually in a spirit of derision, that the neophyte Bush had surrounded himself with a protective phalanx of advisers, a number of whom had served in his father's administration. What was less noticed was that these individuals—from the economic adviser Lawrence Lindsay to foreign-policy types like Condoleezza Rice and Paul Wolfowitz—were not the usual industry representatives or Washington lawyers who ritually swarm around political campaigns. On every issue, Bush seemed to reach out to intellectuals who defied easy categorization, and who also reflected a maturity that characterized the entire campaign. (Not coincidentally, Bush's was the only campaign in memory to seem relatively free of back-stabbing, infighting, and self-destructive leaks to the press.)

The impression made by the campaign was deepened by Bush's post-election choices for his cabinet. Although critics charged that he was simply filling his White House with retreads from his father's or Gerald Ford's administration (Dick Cheney as Vice President, Andrew Card as chief of staff), the team that emerged was more eclectic than anyone could have expected. In picking Donald Rumsfeld to head the Pentagon, Gale Norton as Interior Secretary, Tommy Thompson for the Department of Health and Human Services, Linda Chavez (however briefly) for Labor, Mitch Daniels at the Office of Management and Budget, and John J. DiIulio for the newly created White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, Bush seems to have deliberately gone after men and women who had spent much of their lives advancing bold new policy ideas, often to the chagrin of establishment thinking. Taken together, his team represented an unusually powerful mix of intellectual independence, political experience, and conservative instincts.

As FOR the governing agenda spelled out in his inaugural address, this, too, was a departure. Since Ronald Reagan left office, Republicans have persistently backed a program centered on the three reliable conservative themes of tax reductions, limited government, and military strength. Bush mentioned all three, but more significant were the three other areas he singled out: education, Social Security, and Medicare. For not only are these issues on which Republicans have seemed tongue-tied, they are also, according to a decade's worth of polling, issues on which voters consistently regard Democrats as more trustworthy.

But poll questions about trust, relying as they do on the fuzzy perceptions that respondents already have of political parties, can be misleading. It turns out that questions about specific proposals often elicit quite different answers. On education, for example, the main components of Bush's approach—national testing standards, greater flexibility for teachers and local education authorities—are exactly what centrist voters, of the stripe the Democratic Leadership Council would most like to attract, are looking for. Even on the contentious issue of education vouchers, a survey of opinion research by Gallup has formed no clear consensus, but cer-

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tainly no overwhelming opposition. Indeed, according to Gallup, support for a federal voucher program grows considerably when it is cast in terms of giving parents a choice, providing only partial tuition, and allowing children to attend religious (as opposed to "private") schools—all features of the Bush proposal.

Similarly with Social Security. Some 60 percent of Americans now favor a plan like the one put forward by candidate Bush, in which employees would allocate a portion of their payroll tax to a private account. As might be expected, seniors are the one group of Americans wary of this idea—and yet Bush still managed to win the senior vote in Florida.

Similarly again with Medicare. Polls last year showed the public trusting President Clinton far more than the Republicans on how to fix the troubled program. Yet nearly two-thirds of respondents to a poll conducted last November said they were strongly or somewhat in favor of reforming Medicare by giving federal funds to the states to provide prescription-drug coverage for seniors and by offering beneficiaries a choice of health plans: once again, the main components of Bush's proposal.

All these initiatives have a consistent and appealing theme. In each case they introduce competition, choice, and flexibility into areas once monopolized by government. They promote greater individual responsibility and private-sector initiative. And because they rely on market forces more than on the regulation and expansion of existing entitlements, they promise to bring a greater degree of innovation and efficiency to vast areas of federal spending.

Efficiency, flexibility, and the encouragement of private initiative are also hallmarks of Bush's approach to helping the needy; but they are not the only hallmarks. In the past, Republican policy has largely stressed reforming federal poverty programs by removing perverse financial incentives and shifting responsibility to local authorities. To these much-needed steps, Bush has added his own "compassionate" twist. His decision to create a White House office to explore how faith-based groups that operate social and antipoverty programs can receive federal funds has triggered unsurprising opposition from civil libertarians. But as others, including some liberals, have rightly commented, Bush's willingness to incur political risks by advancing a novel approach toward the poor is the best evidence that he cannot be easily dismissed as a Republican interested in reform only to the extent that it helps pay for tax cuts.

And that brings us to the subject of compassionate conservatism as politics. Throughout the presidential campaign, Al Gore demonized his Republican opponent by raising the specter of "privatizing" Social Security or of replacing our public schools with voucher-supported "private" schools. Clearly, the Democrats had studied the same polling data as the Republicans, and chose words to frighten voters who might otherwise be disposed to give Bush a hearing. But in so doing, they revealed their own inflexibility, and in a way that may come back to haunt them.

Bill Clinton left office insisting that the "dynamic center" of American politics belonged to the Democratic party. In fact, however, and beyond the "knowledge workers," Al Gore's support depended heavily on a very Old-Democratic coalition of minorities, urban liberals, single women, and union members. Playing to their preferences, Gore's campaign barely even mentioned such New Democrat victories of the last eight years as NAFTA, the balanced budget, or the once-celebrated AmeriCorps. At a post-election retreat of Democratic strategists, the pollster Mark J. Penn said the public saw Gore as someone who "would return the party to old liberalism."

The public is on to something. The liberalism of the Democratic party, successfully suppressed by Clinton, is now making a noisy reappearance in Washington. The renewed prominence of the Democrats' leading liberals during Attorney General John Ashcroft's confirmation hearings; the more strident tone being adopted by the AFL-CIO and other liberal activist groups; the presence of more left-leaning Democrats in Congress's freshman class, including Senators Hillary Clinton and Jon Corzine—all this suggests that the era of the New Democrats may turn out to have been a more transient phenomenon than once predicted.

If so, it is another piece of good news for Bush and the Republicans. For how long will voters abide Democratic leaders who remain steadfastly against *any* use of private accounts for Social Security? How supportive will the public be of Democratic insistence on opposing the use of school vouchers in *every* case, even for the poorest children? Should the left wing of the party stick to its guns, and should Bush succeed in winning over some centrist Democrats and independents, he may well end up moving these traditionally "Democratic" issues onto the Republican side.

And that, combined with other trends, could prove a turning point for *his* party. For decades, Republicans have failed to persuade the public of

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the virtues of market-oriented reforms; ties to the old status quo have remained too strong, and too rooted in historical memory. But here is a case—despite the urban/rural split of the electoral map—where the country's changing demographics tilt in favor of the Republicans. In the post-election memo I cited above, Al From estimated that fewer than 10 percent of voters in 2000 were old enough to remember the era of the New Deal. In the minds of future voters, this landmark period of liberal government activism, of large federal programs with centralized planning committees and expansive budgets, will inevitably resonate more dimly still.

Other demographic factors may likewise augur well for Republicans. In educational achievement, the largest bloc in the 2000 election comprised voters reporting "some college." As Karlyn Bowman points out, this is a critical group. Some intend to go back to school; others have finished a degree from a junior college or technical school. In any case, they are ambitious and upwardly mobile—and, remarkably, they make up one out of every three voters. In 1996, they went 48-40 percent for Clinton; in November 2000, they went 51-45 for Bush.

In sum, there is reason to think that Bush may be the sort of Republican whom Democrats ought to fear the most: a credible reformer who may yet be in a position to expose the Democrats as the country's real extremists, standing athwart changes that the public favors.

If this scenario sounds vaguely reminiscent of Bill Clinton's notorious strategy of "triangulation," but from the other side of the aisle, the differences are more salient than the similarities. When he set out to steal the Republicans' thunder and then brand them as extremists, Clinton was acting out of expediency, hoping to save a badly faltering presidency; in order to execute this maneuver, furthermore, he had to abrogate much of what he had entered office pledging to accomplish. By contrast, compassionate conservatism is, for Bush, clearly a matter both of personal conviction and of fidelity to principle. Which only underlines the astuteness of his having appropriated the motif of compassion—the master theme of 50 years and more of American liberalism—and put it to work in behalf of a policy that could end, in the phrase of the great Tory statesman and strategist Benjamin Disraeli, by dishing the Whigs.

WHETHER BUSH can actually pull off this ambitious project of realignment is of course an open question. His greatest weakness may turn out to be his reticent and stumbling speaking style, a true defect in someone whose most important task is to communicate the case for reform. Yet, by the same token, Bush's chief virtue is the uncomplicated nature of his approach to national politics. In a fawning review of his inaugural address in *Slate*, Jacob Weisberg, no friend of Republican politicians, noted that Bush's speech

> laid out an agenda that was impressive in its clarity and simplicity. The President named five things he intends to accomplish. He wants to "reclaim America's schools," "reform Social Security and Medicare," "reduce taxes," "build our defenses beyond challenge," and "confront weapons of mass destruction." You can disagree with these priorities, but you can't fault Bush for not spelling them out clearly enough.

Actually, if Bush succeeds only in spelling out these challenges over the next four years, he may suffer the same fate as his father, his good intentions constantly defeated by Democratic obstinacy and poorly planned compromises. So far, there is every sign that he is determined to avoid that mistake. But—even assuming that the economy remains strong and the world situation relatively quiet—the hard part is yet to come.

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Surrendering to Intermarriage

Jack Wertheimer

For most of their history, the Jews have rightly been regarded, by foes and admirers alike, as a zealously endogamous people. Indeed, Jewish marital exclusiveness has been one of the persistent motifs of anti-Semitic literature from antiquity to the present. Some antagonists have attributed the Jews' insistence on marrying among their own to arrogance, others to a stubborn misanthropy. More recently, it has been seen as a symptom of insufficient civic attachment, even a lack of patriotism.

To outsiders of a more sympathetic cast, the Jewish fidelity to the norms of endogamy is more readily understood as a means of insuring group survival. A small religio-ethnic minority, the Jews have depended upon families to transmit a strong sense of identity across the generations and thus to withstand the allure of majority religions or cultures. Adherents of a faith that commands them to serve as bearers of a specific conception of monotheism, they have also been particularly sensitive to the dangers of dilution through syncretism. Beginning with the biblical text itself, Jewish religious writings warn of the potentially subversive link between exogamy and religious assimilation. "You shall not intermarry with them," the book of Deuteronomy admonishes the Israelites. "Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. For they will turn your children away from Me to worship other gods." The corollary of intermarriage, the Bible instructs, is the attenuation of Israel's adherence to monotheism.

To be sure, no rules are followed universally, and so, over the course of history, Judaism necessarily developed means for creating Jewish families in cases where individual Jews engaged in sexual and marital liaisons with Gentiles. The primary such means was through the conversion of the non-Jewish partner. (In Jewish law, converts have the exact same status, both religiously and ethnically, as native-born Jews—which incidentally is why the term "intermarriage" is reserved only for the union of a Jew with someone born to parents of another faith who has *not* converted to Judaism.) Absent such a conversion, no interfaith liaison stood a chance of winning acceptance within the Jewish community. Indeed, Jews who broke the taboo were usually stigmatized by Jewish society and shunned by their own families.

As with so much else, all this began to change as, over the past 200 years, Jews acquired the right to participate as equals within modern Western nations. The emergence of a "neutral society" (in the phrase of the late historian Jacob Katz) meant that ascribed identities, including those deriving from ethnicity and religion, ceased to carry the force they had had in the Middle Ages; with the collapse of social barriers, people of diverse backgrounds tended

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to mingle more freely, and rates of intermarriage jumped accordingly from one generation to the next. By the mid-20th century, in the years immediately preceding the Holocaust, between a quarter and a third of Jews in the large cities of Western and Central Europe were marrying Gentiles.[1]

Still, even under these circumstances, the articulated norms of the Jewish community held. One would be hard-pressed to find examples of Jewish spokesmen eager to *lift* the taboo on intermarriage, let alone to view such marriages as inevitable. Quite the contrary: high rates of intermarriage continued to be regarded as symptomatic of an alarming process of communal self-dissolution.

That is what makes recent developments on the American Jewish scene seem unprecedented—to say the least. That rates of intermarriage are spiraling is by now well-known: a study conducted in 1990 jolted the community with its finding that those rates, rising steadily since 1960, had reached the stunning level of 52 percent. But neither is this an entirely new phenomenon: other Jewish communities have gone down the same road. What is new is that high rates of intermarriage are increasingly regarded as inescapable, and beyond prevention.

Recently, the largest-circulation Jewish newspaper in the country carried an opinion article pronouncing, with equanimity, that "the Jewish taboo on mixed marriage has clearly collapsed." Around the same time, and more startlingly, the *New York Times* published a photograph taken at the nuptials of a male rabbi and a female Protestant minister, a rite that was itself blessed by an assemblage of priests, ministers, and rabbis, all standing together under a Jewish wedding canopy. What this powerfully suggestive photograph tells us is not just that many American Jews, including at least some of the rabbis among them, have abandoned long-standing communal norms but that they, again including at least some of the rabbis among them, seem to have replaced those norms with an entirely new set of beliefs about what constitutes an authentic expression of Judaism—and what, if anything, lies beyond the limits of such expression. Long in the building, the intermarriage crisis is now propelling a massive transformation of American Jewish life.

II

GIVEN THE depth of this crisis, it is remarkable how long it took to become the focus of sustained attention. Data, it seems, have been but rarely collected, and then only to be pooh-poohed. When a 1971 national survey found that 31 percent of the Jews who had married during the preceding five years had Gentile spouses, the findings were ridiculed as exaggerations—and then ignored.[2] Needless to say, their accuracy was confirmed by subsequent surveys.

But only in the past decade, after the release of the 1990 demographic study, has the sheer scope of the problem come to be a subject of widespread discussion. Although some have subsequently questioned the method by which the figure of 52 percent was arrived at, and other studies have uncovered wide variations from one community to the next,[3] there is general agreement that intermarriage rates are at an all-time high, ranging somewhere between 43 and 52 percent.

No less significantly, both the 1990 study and later surveys have also provided sobering data on life *after* intermarriage, and specifically on the degree to which exogamous families identify themselves as Jews. In brief, such families tend to participate in the life of the Jewish community at far lower rates then the inmarried, and are considerably less likely to join synagogues or other Jewish organizations, to celebrate Jewish holidays, to enroll their children in programs of Jewish education, or to contribute to Jewish charities. As with religious involvement, so with ethnic involvement: in a recent survey conducted by the sociologist Steven M. Cohen, barely 20 percent of intermarried Jews agreed with the statement, "I have a special responsibility to take care of Jews in need around the world." And as for their own social connections, they are less likely than are endogamous Jews to have Jewish friends or even to live in close proximity to a Jewish community.

WHAT IS behind at least some of these trends is hardly a mystery. Until as late as the 1950's, various forms of discrimination continued to obstruct social contacts between American Jews and their neighbors. Entire industries were largely closed to Jews; "covenants" prohibited homeown-

[1] In Communist countries, during the postwar era, intermarriage became the rule rather than the exception, but that was a product of the regime's social engineering, designed to destroy Jewish group existence.

[2] One noteworthy exception to the rule was Marshall Sklare, the leading sociologist of American Jews in the last generation, who frequently lamented the community's "avoidance behavior" on the issue. See, for example, his "Intermarriage and Jewish Survival," COMMENTARY, March 1970. See also David Singer's "Living with Intermarriage," COMMENTARY, July 1979.

[3] In Denver the figure for intermarried couples under age thirty-five stood at 60 percent in 1997, in Orlando at 53 percent in 1993, in Atlanta at 51 percent in 1996. But in Los Angeles, the second largest Jewish community, the figure was at a more reassuring 24 percent in 1997.

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ers in posh neighborhoods from selling to Jews; elite institutions of higher learning imposed strict quotas on the number of Jewish students they would admit for undergraduate and professional study; and private country clubs and recreational facilities refused to admit Jews as members. So dramatically have these circumstances altered that even to recite them is to risk sounding ancient. Not surprisingly, the collapse of barriers has facilitated mobility, and mobility has facilitated intermarriage.

But there is more: today, the American ethos not only sanctions intermarriages across religious and ethnic lines but subtly encourages them. They are, after all, symptomatic of increased tolerance and equality, the twinned ideals that in our age seem to trump all other competing values. How better to show the harmonious mingling of America's heterogeneous population than through the union of individuals of diverse backgrounds? Indeed, it is often those who resist the trend who are now on the defensive, called upon to explain what could possibly be wrong when people from different religious or ethnic groups fall in love and marry. As the journalist Philip Weiss, himself an intermarried Jew, noted deprecatingly of Senator Joseph Lieberman's nomination to the presidential ticket of the Democratic party, "He wants to lead the people; he just doesn't want his children to marry any of them." (Actually, Lieberman would later, inaccurately, deny that Judaism forbids intermarriage.)

Given this attitude—not to mention the prevalence of intermarriage itself—it is hardly surprising that many Jews, and especially younger Jews, no longer consider it particularly important that they seek out a Jewish mate. A 1998 *Los Angeles Times* poll found a mere 21 percent of single Jews stating they would marry *only* someone who was Jewish; 57 percent said the religion of a prospective spouse would not matter at all. Another survey—of some 16,000 participants in a youth program called the Israel Experience[4]—found a significant rise over the years in the percentage who see "nothing wrong" with intermarriage. Still more dramatically, young people who had recently celebrated a bar or bat mitzvah in a Conservative synagogue were asked in 1995 whether they "think it is OK for Jews to marry people of other religions"; nearly two-thirds answered affirmatively. These last two groups of young people are among the more actively *engaged* in Jewish life.

Attitudes are shifting among older Jews as well: this past year, a survey conducted annually by the American Jewish Committee found fewer than two out of five agreeing with the statement, "It would pain me if my child married a Gentile," and only 15 percent would urge rabbis to refuse to officiate at interfaith weddings. Fully half claimed that "it is racist to oppose Jewish-Gentile marriages." Strikingly, it was the oldest cohort of this population, those over age 65, who were the most open-minded on the question, a pattern that may well reflect what they see happening among their own and their friends' children.

Even in the Orthodox community, where rates of intermarriage remain low, there is a growing reluctance to oppose such unions, at least publicly. Organizations like Lubavitch routinely honor intermarried Jews at public functions or permit entertainers who are themselves intermarried to perform at such events; neither would once have been thinkable. One Orthodox publication recently featured an article by a Jewish celebrity who thought nothing of mentioning his Mormon wife.

No wonder, then, that communal spokesmen have increasingly come to liken widespread intermarriage to an act of nature. Being for or against it, declares the sociologist Egon Mayer, "is like being for or against the weather. It is a demographic and social reality." This helplessness has in turn infected policy.

III

ESSENTIALLY, THAT policy follows two separate tracks. The first, which travels under the catch-all rubric of promoting "Jewish continuity," involves a conscious effort to make Jewish life more compelling to Jews themselves, so as to retain the allegiance of young people. In particular, the field of Jewish education has won new allies and attracted serious funding that has revitalized programs ranging from formal schooling to youth movements, summer camps, and Jewish centers on university campuses.

Much that is constructive has come from these initiatives. But as a strategy to address intermarriage, they disable themselves by proceeding through indirection. In the hope, no doubt, of developing such enthusiasm for Jewish living that young Jews will not even consider looking elsewhere, rabbis, religious educators, and organizational leaders do not even discuss the subject of intermarriage openly, much less criticize those Jews who do intermarry or make a case against the practice based on group interest and/or religious belief. Whether they are deterred by fear of antagonizing

[4] These findings will appear in a forthcoming study by Erik Cohen of Bar Ilan University.

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the vast population of intermarried Jews and their families, or by despair at the prospect of earning a fair hearing, is not clear. But the silence itself is deafening.[5]

The second course of action, and the one that largely concerns me here, focuses directly on the "needs" of the already intermarried. A broad range of institutions have formulated new policies and programs designed to bring these "interfaith" families into involvement with Jewish communal life—to encourage them to join synagogues, enroll their children in Jewish schools, become members of Jewish organizations, and contribute to Jewish charities.

Given the sheer number of such families, it is hardly surprising that communal institutions would seek to reach out to them. After all, to concede the loss of so many Jews and their offspring would be to write off a huge segment of the American Jewish population. Nor is intermarriage a mere abstraction. Almost all adult Jews can name close friends or members of their immediate or extended family who have married out, and Jewish grandparents routinely face the need to balance their desire for closeness with their children and grandchildren against the fact that many of these grandchildren have little, if any, connection with anything Jewish. In other words, very large numbers of American Jews have a strong emotional stake in the phenomenon, and want their institutions to respond to it in a way that will allay their anxieties.

AS FOR the specific approaches that have been proffered to achieve such "outreach," they range across a spectrum.

At the more traditional end, the Conservative movement and the relatively small number of Orthodox institutions that deal with the intermarried expect such families to respect communal boundaries and play by Jewish rules. What this entails in practice is drawing a clear distinction between the rights and responsibilities of Jews and those of Gentiles. The latter, for example, are welcome in a synagogue, but may not take a public role in religious services or in synagogue governance. It is made clear that only through conversion to Judaism in full accordance with the provisions of Jewish law will someone not born Jewish be treated as a Jew. And "not born Jewish" includes a person whose father is Jewish but whose mother is not, the latter constituting the traditional rabbinic criterion for identification as a born Jew.

Still, even within this relatively bounded approach there is controversy. At what point must a child, born to an intermarried Jewish father and a Gentile mother, convert to Judaism in order to participate in the life of the synagogue—before the child is enrolled in religious school, or upon reaching the age of bar or bat mitzvah? And when such a child does come of age, should the non-Jewish parent be permitted to utter a public prayer during the relevant religious service, particularly if that parent has taken an active role in raising the child as a Jew? Such questions challenge anyone seeking to balance two contradictory goals: encouraging the positively inclined to identify themselves unambiguously with Judaism while clearly demarcating the lines separating Jews and Gentiles.

A second approach, favored primarily by the secular agencies of the Jewish community, eschews such demarcation. Instead, it aims to help interfaith couples decide how *they* would like to relate to Jewish life. Conversion is not even discussed in such settings. ("That's just not where these families are at," reports one "outreach worker.") Rather, community centers and other agencies offer introductory lessons about Judaism, accompanied by "therapeutic rap sessions" meant to aid couples in negotiating the dilemmas of living in an interfaith household.

A more extreme variation on this model of outreach employs many of the same features but, instead of being studiously neutral, actively seeks to help couples smooth the bumps in their relationship. "The right thing to do," a rabbi heading a program portentously called the Jericho Project (it seeks to break down the walls separating the intermarried from the rest of the Jewish community), "is not to be judgmental about a decision that has already been made. . . . The question is, 'How can we help you work through it?'" Why a Jewish institution should sponsor a program designed to make intermarriage less stressful is left unexplained.

A third model, which has largely triumphed in the Reform and Reconstructionist movements, goes further still, blurring the definition of who Jews *are*. Proponents of this type of outreach meet interfaith families more than halfway, offering them, in the critical words of Rabbi Michael Wasserman, "authentication as Jewish families [and] easier access to the rituals by which the Jewish community defines its boundaries."

The decision on "patrilineality" taken in 1983 by the Reform movement is a case in point. As I have

[5] For an exception, see the two 1995 volumes by Rabbi Alan Silverstein, *It All Begins With a Date: Jewish Concerns about Intermarriage* and *Preserving Jewishness in Your Family: After Intermarriage Has Occurred.*

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noted, the traditional definition of a Jew is one who is born of a Jewish mother or who has converted in conformity with Jewish law. Now, with the stroke of a pen, tens of thousands of children born to Gentile mothers were arbitrarily deemed Jewish by virtue of having Jewish fathers, while grown Jewish men entering into marriage with Gentile women were relieved of worry about the Jewishness of their progeny. A similarly radical step with no traditional sanction has been the decision of individual rabbis to officiate at interfaith marriages—a step often defended as a means of maintaining contact with the newlyweds in the hope of competing for their future allegiance.

In recent years, several even more quixotic solutions have been devised. Convinced that there are large numbers of "unchurched" Americans actively searching for meaning who could be attracted to Judaism, some rabbis and communal leaders advocate programs of "proactive" conversion, public campaigns to market Judaism to any and all takers. Barely concealed behind such ambitious missionizing plans is a more modest goal: winning over the Gentile spouses of Jews, a population that has already had some exposure to the Jewish heritage and theoretically may have some incentive to convert. But other outreach advocates assert that most Gentiles married to Jews have little interest in converting, and therefore it is wrong to proselytize them.[6] Instead of seeking converts, Egon Mayer argues, the Jewish community should accept unconditionally any Gentile in an interfaith family as a fully functioning member of the Jewish *people*, a status for which no conversion should be necessary.

IV

THE PREMISE of outreach is that if only Jews remove barriers to the integration of non-Jews, the latter—and especially their offspring—will opt to join the Jewish community. Outreach efforts have now been in place for over two decades. What do we actually know about intermarried families and what they want for *themselves*?

According to the most rigorous study to date, conducted by the sociologist Bruce Phillips during the mid-1990's[7]—that is, fifteen to twenty years after many outreach programs were instituted—fully a third of such families identify themselves entirely as Christian or as "Christian-centric." Almost another third consists of dual-religion households that incorporate some of the rituals and holidays of both Christianity and Judaism into their lives. A mere 14 percent fall into a category Phillips describes as "Judaic," meaning, for him, that "the *balance* of religious observance is clearly in the favor of Judaism" (emphasis added). Thus, whereas 86 percent of such nominally "Judaic" families light Hanukkah candles, 60 percent of these same families also have a Christmas tree.

In short, the overall conclusions of Phillips's study offer little comfort to advocates of outreach: in mixed-marriage families, Christian observances are almost always more prevalent than Jewish ones, and "the burden of Jewish connection falls upon the Jewish partner who must ultimately go it alone." Put more directly, the large majority of intermarried families are not prepared to embrace Judaism wholeheartedly or to identify themselves unambiguously as Jews.

This conclusion comports with the findings of an earlier study by the Jewish Outreach Institute, according to which 73 percent of intermarried couples celebrated both Christmas and Hanukkah and 68 percent of Jews married to non-Jewish spouses did not fast on Yom Kippur. It also punctures two cherished beliefs. One concerns the potential market of "unchurched" or "interfaithless" families in search of a new religious message: since only 10 percent of interfaith families fall into this category—and *they* are secularists—it seems that "unchurched" Gentiles are no more eager to embrace Judaism than "un-synagogued" Jews are in quest of religious alternatives to Judaism.[8] The other concerns the role of women: although the Reform movement (preceded by the Reconstructionists) redefined Jewish identity so as to insure that children of Jewish fathers would be treated as no less Jewish than children of Jewish mothers, Phillips found that "Jewish women are more likely to raise Jewish children" than are Jewish men: a sociological truth implicitly recognized by the rabbis nearly 2,000 years ago.

The most sobering findings of the Phillips study

[6] It is worth noting in this connection that the longstanding acceptance of conversion as a wholly legitimate means of joining the Jewish religion and people gives the lie to those who view Jewish marital exclusiveness as "racist." To complicate matters, though, the standards for conversion set by the more liberal movements within Judaism are not accepted by movements to their right as satisfying the requirements of religious law.

[7] Bruce A. Phillips, *Reexamining Intermarriage: Trends, Textures, Strategies*. American Jewish Committee, William Petschek National Jewish Family Center and the Susan and David Wilstein Institute of Jewish Policy Studies, 1997.

[8] The incidence of conversion has certainly not kept pace with rising rates of intermarriage—quite to the contrary, in fact. Although no one has collected definitive data, it actually appears that rates of conversion to Judaism have plummeted precisely as the boundaries have become more elastic.

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concern child-rearing. A quarter of children in mixed-married families are raised in both the Jewish and Christian religions; a third are raised exclusively as Christians; another quarter are given no religious upbringing at all; and only 18 percent are raised exclusively as Jews. Naturally, there are those who assert that a still greater investment in outreach and even more stretching of boundaries will win over a larger number of children. But the truth is that families desirous of raising their children as Jews have ample opportunity to do so already, and there is no vast army of the underserved just waiting for Jewish institutions to reach them.

TO PUT it bluntly: the overwhelming majority of intermarried families do not appear to *want* their children to have an unambiguous identification with Judaism. More: dual-religion families—the second largest contingent of the intermarried—have begun to organize to rebuff those seeking to change them, making it clear that they wish to maintain only limited contact with Jewish institutions, and then only on their own terms. Some go farther still, denying the central premise of the outreach movement—namely, that an interfaith family is "problematic." As a recent letter in the *New York Times* put it, the true goal is to "celebrate the distinctiveness and authenticity of each faith and the value of nurturing *both traditions in a mixed family*" (emphasis added).

In line with such sentiments, a kind of "interfaith is beautiful" movement has now come into being, its essence captured in a new title: *The Half-Jewish Book: A Celebration.*[9] The authors, an interfaith couple named Daniel Klein and Freke Vuijst, believe the future belongs to them:

> [T]he number of American half-Jews under the age of eleven exceeds the number of American full Jews under eleven. . . . So it is only fair to ask: Is this really a time for lamenting and denying . . . or is it a time to celebrate this unique, unusually talented, intellectually multifaceted, and remarkably attractive subculture?

The authors opt for the latter. Their book regales readers with "half-Jewish" jokes (What do you call someone who is "half-Jewish/half-Jehovah's Witness?" "The ultimate door-to-door salesman"); identifies a pantheon of sports and entertainment figures who are "half-Jews," including Xaviera Hollander, the "Happy Hooker"; and, in the best tradition of middle-brow apologetics, lists the great "half-Jews" who have contributed to—or at least entertained—humanity. Noticeably absent is any discussion of what these figures have contributed to the "multifaceted and remarkably attractive subculture" of Judaism.

As Wendy Shalit has observed,[10] an entire industry has cropped up to address such dual-religion families, aggressively marketing children's books, greeting cards, and appropriately reconfigured ritual objects like *ketubot*, Jewish wedding contracts, specially designed to "keep alive a Jewish flavor" in interfaith homes. With their jaunty approach (a Christmas-Hanukkah card reads: "Happy Whichever"), these products send a message in synch with the country's multiculturalist mood: the more diverse the combination of religious traditions and ethnic folkways, the better. Multiple allegiances, no matter how superficial and contradictory, are superior to one.

One of the chief outlets peddling this message is a website called interfaithfamily.com, sponsored by a Jewish organization that claims its mission is to "encourage Jewish choices." But the website's publisher, Edmund Case, is an ardent crusader *against* the idea that the proper "Jewish choice" is Judaism. Case has criticized Rabbi Eric Yoffie, the president of the Reform movement's synagogue organization, for urging his movement to encourage conversion and thereby insinuating "that those who do not convert are less valued, less worthy, or deficient in important respects"; he has also castigated the Reform rabbinate for voting not to bestow synagogue honors upon Gentiles married to Jews. The religious movement that has made the greatest compromises in the name of outreach thus finds itself targeted for not going nearly far enough.

But this, too, is not surprising. Writing in 1993, the former executive director of the Reform rabbinate, Rabbi Joseph Glaser, ruefully noted that his movement had not "anticipate[d] the clientele aspect [of intermarriage], nor the vested interest of the outreach establishment." In catering to the population of intermarried Jews and their families, synagogues and community centers created a new lobby. Congregations now often *require* their rabbis to officiate at interfaith weddings, often alongside Christian clergy, and discourage them from speaking about or urging conversion. Agencies of Jewish philanthropy employ a large cadre of social workers to help keep intermarried families intact. In religious schools run by synagogues, teachers can no longer utter a word in favor of endogamy, or prevent Jewish youngsters from being exposed to the jumbled religious views of their dual-faith classmates who, often "confused

[9] Villard, 305 pp., $22.95.

[10] "Intermarriage, Inc.," COMMENTARY, March 1997.

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about which religion is which" (as Bruce Phillips has reported), have trouble telling "who is Jesus and who is Moses."

All this, to address problems that multiply with every measure taken to address them: lingering frustrations between intermarried husbands and wives that issue in divorce rates considerably higher than among endogamous Jews, children who grow up torn and bewildered, extended families anxious on each side to assert their own religious prerogatives and not infrequently competing openly for the allegiance of children and grandchildren. The burgeoning needs of the intermarried and their families present rabbis, educators, and other communal leaders with a whole series of dilemmas, basically interpersonal in nature, that they are powerless to fix or often even to ameliorate. And what, in the meantime, about the needs of the community whose institutions and norms these leaders have been charged with upholding?

V

AND SO we come to the paradox at the heart of the intermarriage debate. Most Jewish leaders have become convinced that it is no more possible to prevent widespread intermarriage than it is to alter the seasons. Instead, the community has been trying to persuade people raised in other faiths either to convert to Judaism or to raise their children in a faith that is alien to them. But, no matter how low the bar has been placed, or how deep the self-abasement practiced by the bearers of Jewish norms, that effort has been a resounding failure. Worse, rather than strengthening Jewish life, which is the community's ostensible goal, much of what has been done in the name of "outreach" has been diluting it.

Intermarriage in America today represents the reverse of what the biblical text admonished. Rather than being the cause of assimilation, it is often the consequence: the culmination of a long process whereby Jews have willingly surrendered ever more aspects of their distinctive worldview in order to ease their own Americanization. Long before large numbers of Jews regularly crossed social boundaries to seek spouses outside the confines of the community, they had erased the lines separating Judaism itself from other cultural perspectives.

This development has been described by the sociologist Sylvia Barack Fishman as "coalescence"—"a pervasive process through which American Jews merge American and Jewish ideas, incorporating American liberal values such as free choice, universalism, and pluralism into their understanding of Jewish identity." So widespread and natural is this process that most American Jews believe there are few differences between a "Jewish" perspective on the world and the perspective of contemporary American culture at large—a belief that requires one both to underestimate the depth of conviction among believing Christians and to cultivate an abysmal ignorance about Judaism.

As to the first, recently a well-known Jewish journalist urged rabbis to "remove the stigma from thirty-something Jewish women dating and marrying non-Jewish men" on the grounds that the women's biological clocks were ticking and they probably would never bear children if they waited much longer. Since, the writer continued, these women, being Jews themselves, were likely to raise Jewish children in any event, and since their offspring would be accepted as Jews in Jewish law, why not lift the taboo? In the same vein, at a meeting of "young Jewish leaders" several single women stated that they would gladly marry a non-Jewish "soul-mate" provided he did not object to having his children raised as Jews.

Earlier I quoted a rabbi warning against "judgmentalism" when a decision to intermarry "has already been made"; here we have an admonishment against judgmentalism before the prospective couple have even gone on their first date. But what this line of reasoning also reveals is an appalling naiveté about Gentiles who marry Jews. To imagine, as many young women apparently do, that they will find a "soul-mate" with no attachment to the religion of his birth, and with no qualms about raising his children in a foreign religious culture, is to deny everything we know about unions of two people of very different backgrounds.

The vast majority of those who intermarry with Jews harbor powerful, if often unconscious, attachments to the religion of their birth, even if it sometimes takes the arrival of a child to awaken that connection. If they have not done so before, most Christian parents discover that they want their children to enjoy the experience of having a Christmas tree, eating a festive Easter and Christmas dinner, and perhaps attending church and religious school, just as they did as youngsters. Obliviousness to this fact on the part of Jews—one "webzine" directed at Generation X Jews confides, breezily, that "many Americans are already part of the way toward what might be considered a Reform Jewish attitude on life" and "simply don't buy the Jesus concept"—is merely another symptom of what all too often turns out to be a fatal delusion.

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Ignorance and obliviousness extend just as fatally to many Jews' understanding of their own traditions. "Basically," instruct the (Jewish) authors of a new self-help guide for non-Jews dating Jews, "every Jewish holiday is just an excuse to get the loved ones together to eat"[11]—a leveling attitude that no doubt informs the insouciance with which, in many a "half-Jewish" home, the Hanukkah candles are lit next to a dazzling Christmas tree, and some customary songs are sung, without the slightest comprehension that Hanukkah celebrates the triumphant Jewish struggle *against* religious syncretism, as well as the fierce resistance of Jews throughout history to, among other things, Christianity. In short, far from being reconcilable, or reducible to a shared festive meal, Christmas and Hanukkah are perfectly and irreconcilably antithetical.

But how is anyone to know this if no one dares say it? In pursuit of their short-term interests, many leaders of American Jewry's key institutions—its schools, synagogues, community centers, and federations of philanthropy—have persuaded themselves that openness and inclusiveness are keys to survival. How these institutions are going to survive in the medium or longer term, as they come to serve more and more people who no longer subscribe to their most basic purposes, is a question that few have brought themselves to confront, though the answer seems distressingly plain enough.

Plain, too, are the alternative courses of action that would preserve those same institutions. For all its homogenizing impulses, contemporary America is more tolerant and even indulgent of genuine differences than any society in history. The most esoteric and inward-directed groups are accorded a respectful hearing; how much more so, those plainly desirous of contributing to the common weal and of participating to the fullest extent possible in the life of society. But, for any community determined to ensure the survival of its own island in the pluralist sea, the very minimum required is that it be willing to assert without apology the absolute worth of its traditions and beliefs.

For the leaders of American Jewry, meeting this requirement would mean adopting an altogether new tack. It would mean speaking forthrightly and directly about where, and how, and why Judaism dissents from the universalist ethos of the culture at large. And it would especially mean speaking in behalf of the *distinctive* commandments, beliefs, and values for the sake of which Jews over the millennia—born Jews and those who have joined themselves to the Jewish people through conversion alike—have willingly, and gratefully, set themselves apart: apart from the blandishments of powerful majority religions and cultures, and apart from the temptations of "giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons." But that, so far, is a task for which most of these leaders have shown little appetite.

[11] Vikki Weiss and Jennifer A. Block, *What to Do When You're Dating a Jew*. Crown, 144 pp., $12.00 (paper).

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What to Do About the Energy Crunch

Irwin M. Stelzer

EVENTS HAVE conspired to remind us how heavily dependent we are on a steady supply of energy.

In California, as all the world knows by now, shortages of electricity have sent prices skyrocketing, causing factory closures and periodic blackouts, and—thanks to a regulatory scheme described as "lunacy" by Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill—have brought the state's utilities to financial ruin. According to Curt Hébert, appointed by President Bush to chair the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, New York State is next in line for a similar disaster.

In the Northeast and other parts of the country, shortages of natural gas caused prices to quadruple at the peak of the heating season. To make matters worse, the many electric generating plants that rely on natural gas for fuel—coal having been declared environmentally unacceptable, and nuclear power having been declared either unsafe or too costly—have seen their costs spike and in some instances have simply shut down and sold their remaining gas in the lucrative open market.

Meanwhile, a newly potent international cartel has driven the price of oil to approximately three times the level that prevailed just a short time ago, introducing American motorists to $2-a-gallon gasoline and causing so serious a drain on consumer purchasing power that the Federal Reserve Board, in cutting interest rates sooner and more steeply than anyone had predicted, cited high oil prices as one of the reasons for the current economic slowdown.

This triple whammy has accomplished two things: one good, one bad. On the plus side, it has reminded Americans that in the long run there can be no benign neglect of energy policy. The American economy runs on energy, which is one reason that it is so efficient. By substituting energy for muscle power, we have managed to increase the productivity of our agriculture and our factories, to move goods over huge distances at low cost, to power the Internet revolution, and to improve the quality of everyday life. (How many Americans now remember suffering through a heat wave without air conditioning?) Thanks to an abundant supply of electrical energy, we now have a thriving economy in states once made virtually uninhabitable by weather unconducive to year-round work.

The other, less salutary "lesson" that is emerging from our current difficulties is that when energy markets do not work, government intervention is needed to correct the failure. To this, the proper answer is that if intervention is indeed called for, it should be aimed at rooting out whatever is causing the markets to fail to do their job of balancing supply and demand, not at creating a new permanent role for the government. Politicians, of course, find

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it difficult to resist the temptation to overstay their usefulness. In California, they are expanding their regulatory role and, worse still, have used the current crisis to engineer a partial takeover of the private sector. In New York, the governor is proposing to cap electricity prices, while in the nation's capital politicians are proposing to manipulate tax regimes and to use the strategic petroleum reserve to maintain prices at some "acceptable" level.

But prices are the symptom, not the cause, of the disease that has discomfited us. Having diagnosed the wrong ailment, policymakers are proceeding to prescribe the wrong medicine, and to take us in precisely the wrong direction.

WHAT HAS happened in California is clear to all who would see. The state's economy has boomed, led by "new economy" industries that, however sleek and high-tech, consume at least as much energy as old-economy steel mills and refineries. Meanwhile, California's environmentally sensitive planners have refused to allow any new generating plants to be built in the past twenty years. The problem was compounded last year by low reservoir levels in Oregon and Washington, reducing the available supply of hydropower on which California depends, especially in the summer.

What else would a growing demand imposed on a fixed supply do, if not send prices up? To protect themselves from the ire of consumers, however, the state's politicians had set ceilings on the retail prices that utilities could charge for electricity. In the meantime, they set no ceilings on what those utilities would have to pay to buy electricity in wholesale markets in the first place—this could amount to five times more than they were permitted to bill their customers for—*and* they obliged the utilities to buy all the power that retail customers might want.

Unlike the rise in wholesale gasoline prices, seen immediately at the pumps by consumers and thus causing them to reconsider their driving plans, the rise in electricity prices was noticed only by the utilities. As they bought dear and sold cheap, sinking deeper and deeper into debt, Californians, shielded from reality by price controls, continued consuming as if nothing had changed. A better prescription for disaster cannot be imagined.

The same sort of regulatory nightmare contributed to the soaring heating bills of natural-gas customers. The demand for gas has been stimulated by restrictions placed on the use of coal to generate electricity—restrictions that, according to the analyst George Schreiber, add somewhere between one-third and one-half to the cost of a coal plant. But the increase in demand has also come at a time when exploring for new gas supplies has itself been inhibited in part by restrictions on drilling offshore and in the Arctic. Increasing demand, a relatively fixed supply: once again, a rise in prices was inevitable.

There is nothing inherently evil about rising prices. The American economy is the powerhouse it is because changes in prices direct resources to uses that are responsive to consumer needs. What distinguishes the prices of electricity and natural gas from those that fluctuate in response to patterns of supply and demand is that they are the result not of markets but of men. In a free market, rising prices can be expected to spur producers to increase supply, and consumers to curtail demand. But neither of those reactions was possible in California, where not only have environmental restrictions prevented the construction of plants to provide more electricity—and, during the recent shortage, caused several already-built plants to lie idle—but consumers have been shielded from the price signals that might induce them to conserve. In short, it is not that markets are unable to bring demand and supply into better balance; it is that they have not been permitted to do so.

The California fiasco threatens the financial viability of the state's utilities, its power providers, and, to judge by the involvement of the Federal Reserve, the health of some of the banks that have lent money to those companies. The shortage of electricity at prices the state will allow customers to pay will also deter companies from settling there, depressing the local economy, with, according to Alan Greenspan, important ripple effects for the national economy. All this is bad enough. But the situation in the oil markets is more troubling still—in fact, much more troubling, with profound implications for the overall health of the American economy as well as for our ability to pursue an independent foreign policy in the Middle East

IN THE oil markets, the strong arm of a producer cartel has replaced the invisible hand of Adam Smith as the determinant of prices that we pay to keep the wheels of commerce turning. What this means is that Spencer Abraham, the new Secretary of Energy, may well turn out to have as important a role to play as Greenspan, George W. Bush, and Colin Powell. For not only has Abraham assumed the chore of running a hugely inefficient bureaucracy that he once, while serving in the Senate, sought to eliminate, but he will also have to take the lead in wresting total power over the price of oil from a handful of Arab sheiks and a Venezuelan leftist.

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The facts are once again uncomplicated. America accounts for about 25 percent of the world's oil consumption but produces only about 10 percent of the world's oil. And worse is to come: the United States possesses less than 3 percent of the world's untapped oil reserves, the great bulk of which lie under the sands or in some cases the soil of the 12 members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC): Algeria, Gabon, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela. These nations, when they act together, can importantly affect the economic well-being of every society that relies on oil to power its factories, run its cars and trucks, and heat its homes. And because in many countries the price of natural gas is tied by edict or by market forces to the price of oil, OPEC's policies have a major impact on the price of that fuel as well.

Since the end of the Arab oil boycott of the mid-1970's and until recently, the consuming nations have benefited from the inability of the often quarrelsome producing nations to cooperate in a price-fixing conspiracy. But then the price of oil fell to $10 per barrel—a figure that, although still higher than what would prevail in a freely competitive market, was evidently too low to permit the producing nations to fund their arms purchases, their subsidization of anti-Israel terrorists and other groups, the massive subsidies doled out to their disenfranchised middle classes to prevent discontent from boiling over into outright revolution, and payments to princes and other potentates whose taste for the good life exceeds what their talents would command in a global workplace. Suddenly, the Arab kings felt poor and became debt-ridden, and the stage was set for renewed cooperation.

Enter Luis Téllez, then the energy minister of Mexico, an oil-rich state but not a member of OPEC. Until now, Venezuela and Saudi Arabia, two of America's major suppliers, had been reluctant to raise prices by cutting production, fearing that Mexico would fill the gap by opening its own taps wider. But Téllez assured them that this would not happen, brokering a deal that would eventually lead to OPEC-wide action and to the tripling of prices we live with today.

The role of Venezuela in the current crisis is also noteworthy. Its new president, Hugo Chávez, came to power in 1999 trumpeting his fondness for Fidel Castro and Saddam Hussein and calling for a redistribution of income from the developed nations to the developing ones. As for the predilections of his oil minister, one Alí Rodríguez Araque, these are adequately captured in the *New York Times* description of him as "on the far left fringe of Mr. Chávez's coalition." But it is not ideology alone that has kept Venezuela solidly in the camp of OPEC members who want to keep production low and prices high. Venezuela's failure to invest in exploration and development, or in modern technology, means that its state-owned oil company is physically incapable of producing more oil. Adhering to an OPEC production quota therefore costs it nothing.

The same is not true of Kuwait, the country that American troops risked their lives to save from Saddam Hussein while the Kuwaiti royal family fled to London and its casinos. Possessing about 10 percent of the world's oil reserves, Kuwait produces only 3 percent of the world's oil. It is thus one of the OPEC countries that could turn on the taps immediately and, if it so chose, increase its production capability even further. Since it costs so little to find, develop, and produce oil from new fields in Kuwait—perhaps as low as $2.50 a barrel—the country was making a handsome profit even at the old, "depressed" price of $10. Yet, when the price recently fell below $30, it was Kuwait's oil minister who led the charge for further curtailments of output. Habits of greed die hard.

Saudi Arabia is not far behind in the "hawk" category—but in this case for reasons only partly related to greed. In fact, Sheik Ahmed Zaki Yamani, the former oil minister and "a man whose name is synonymous with black gold," in the words of the London *Observer*, has warned his countrymen that a further cut in output might well end up harming the economies of oil producers themselves. Not only would a recession in the West reduce the value of the billions the Saudis have invested in Western economies, it would also encourage exploration of non-OPEC sources of oil, development of alternative fuels, and conservation. Nevertheless, the Saudi royal family does not live by bread alone. As Yamani says, "When you deal with oil you have to take so many other things into consideration."

One of those things is the Israel-Arab conflict. Saudi leaders have made no secret of their displeasure with what they see as an American tilt toward Israel in its negotiations with the PLO; holding back the supply of oil is one way of sending a message. And the Saudis (and Kuwaitis) may also be taking a hard line in part to appease their own fundamentalist and pro-Palestinian constituencies, a restive and perennially threatening element in those societies.

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BUT MOTIVES matter little. What does matter is that so long as American prosperity is held hostage to Arab oil producers, aided and abetted by an anticapitalist populist in Venezuela and a fellow-traveling government in Mexico, we will not have a free hand in setting our own foreign or economic policy. And the consequences of not having a free hand are ominous indeed, not least for George W. Bush if he ends up presiding over a major recession after eight years of Clinton prosperity—which may be one reason he announced that his first foreign port of call would be Mexico.

One way to assess the impact of OPEC collusion on the American economy is to consider the difference made by a rise in the price of oil from $10 per barrel to what seems to be OPEC's new target price of $30. Since we import about 9 million barrels per day, the recent increase is transferring almost $65 billion per year from the pockets of American consumers to the various Arab kingdoms and other producing nations. (It has also transferred an approximately equal sum to *domestic* producers, but that is a matter of internal distribution that does not affect overall economic activity to anything like the same degree.) No one knows how large a tax cut Bush will wring from Congress, but even if he were to get everything he wanted, over the next ten years the oil producers will have claimed 50 cents out of every dollar he aims to return to the nation's taxpayers.

Nor, unlike in the mid-1970's, do the producers have any intention of being so generous in recycling their newly inflated profits. More recently, the money has been invested not in Western economies but at home—in infrastructure, job-creation schemes, and the repayment of debts. Although some petrodollars are filtering into the Western banking system, the proportion is nowhere near so large as during earlier oil-price booms.

Clinton's Energy Secretary, Bill Richardson, spent his final days in office shuttling from Arab capital to Arab capital begging various ministers and sheiks not to cut back production, at least not before the West got through the winter and built up inventories in the spring. But looking for gratitude in Kuwait is as fruitful as looking for oil under the White House lawn, and asking the Saudi regime to put economic sense above the PLO line is as rewarding as asking the more extreme environmentalists to ease our national shortage by withdrawing their opposition to new drilling or new power plants. No, for a way out of our predicament we will have to look not to OPEC but to ourselves.

THE QUESTION before us is not the one that President Nixon once asked: how can we become independent of foreign sources of oil? To that question, the short answer is that we cannot. We now import more than half of our oil, and will soon be importing an even larger percentage. This is not because we are wastrels, but because our highly efficient economy relies on energy to fuel its highly productive agriculture and its increasingly productive industry. But if independence is not in our future, what *might* be in our future, if we act wisely, is oil priced at more competitive levels.

On the supply side of things, the first objective must be to increase the development of whatever energy resources are available to us. This does not mean gutting the environment to keep our sport-utility vehicles rolling, but it does mean a more realistic assessment of the benefits of increased domestic production measured against its environmental costs. Although it might have made sense to ban some offshore drilling and Arctic exploration when oil stood at $10 per new barrel, the calculation surely shifts when potential output is valued at three times that level. Energy is not a priceless resource; but neither is the environment.

The same reasoning applies to the electric power industry. California, New York, and other industrialized states will have to chose between some—not all—environmental amenities and an adequate supply of electricity at prices that consumers deem acceptable. How they choose should be up to them, but one option—cheap electricity *and* no new plants—is not available.

As for the demand side, one objective would be to make certain that consumers of energy are charged all of the costs their consumption imposes on society. If OPEC-induced price run-ups threaten us with dire economic consequences—some studies reckon that every $5 increase in the price of oil knocks 0.3 percentage points off GDP—then the costs of such upheavals should be reflected in the prices paid by energy users, including by means of additional taxes if necessary. Such taxes need not go to swell the Treasury's coffers: they can be recycled in the form of efficiency-enhancing lower marginal income-tax rates. Lest I be accused here of sounding like Al Gore, let me add that there is a difference between, on the one hand, forcing consumers to pay all of the costs that their use of energy imposes on others and, on the other hand, raising taxes simply to curtail energy use to some level that a politician deems acceptable. Cost-based taxes might also make energy more expensive, of course, but that would encourage consumers to

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conserve by investing in insulation or in more efficient appliances, or by driving less.

Finally, we must take steps to weaken the OPEC cartel. In part, the market is already doing just that, as oil companies, seemingly assured that prices are unlikely to fall below the range of $14 to $16, are stepping up their investments in domestic production. But this will not be enough, and that is where politics comes in.

Mexico, to begin there, sorely needs us to buy its goods, and also to turn a blind eye to the tide of illegal immigration coming across our common border. Assuredly we do not want to lose the benefits of Mexico's cheaper goods. But we might suggest to the Mexicans that a situation in which we are expected to buy their sneakers, television sets, and other products while they threaten our prosperity by withholding oil is not acceptable, and that any decision we might take to retaliate by curtailing purchases from Mexico will hurt them a lot more than it will hurt us. In a similar vein, we might suggest to Kuwait that it can continue to live under American protection only so long as it pumps sufficient oil to keep prices at reasonable levels; faced with the choice of producing more or becoming a province of Iraq, even the Kuwaitis might be expected to recognize where their self-interest lies.*

Another arrow in our cartel-busting quiver is our antitrust laws. These have never been applied to OPEC, despite good legal precedent, because the State Department has always interposed its large institutional body. That could change if Colin Powell willed it so. Although new legislation might be necessary, surely few congressmen would vote for OPEC's interests over those of American consumers.

The informing principle behind all these suggestions is that they are designed not to interfere with markets but to make them work better: by getting the price signals right, by removing uneconomic restrictions on supply, and by introducing more competition. What I do *not* propose are subsidies to this or that favored technology; special tax breaks to encourage consumers to behave this way or that; rationing or price controls; or merely punitive taxes on energy use. Although none of the measures I outline would, alas, eliminate the problem created by God when He put oil in such inhospitable places, some combination of them would go a long way toward increasing our international freedom of action and reducing the risk and impact of periodic shocks. If we do nothing, those shocks are only likely to become much more intense, and much more sustained.

* As for Iran (Iraq remaining obviously beyond the pale), it has large untapped reserves, and, thanks to a twenty-year gap in significant investment, is producing far below its potential. Perhaps—and one can say no more than that—an opening to Iran might lend support to its reformers, such as they are, and perhaps, too, some program could be worked out to tie increased Western investment in exploration and production to a commitment by the Iranians to sell the newly found oil at reasonable prices.

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Mad Cows & Englishmen

Steven A. Shaw

When bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) strikes, cattle become disoriented and apprehensive. They rapidly lose the ability to walk straight, they exhibit frenzied twitching movements, they separate from the herd, and eventually they cannot even stand. There is no known treatment or method of prevention. Colloquially known as mad-cow disease, BSE relentlessly attacks the spinal cord and brain, and its onset means swift and certain death.

The first cases of BSE were described in the United Kingdom in 1986 by scientists at the Central Veterinary Laboratory, and it soon appeared possible that the nation's herd was in the grip of the rising curve of an epidemic. In May 1988, the British government established a committee to evaluate the risks. Since mad-cow disease appeared similar to a neurodegenerative disease in sheep called scrapie, early investigations concluded that an infectious agent had been transmitted to cattle via feed supplements made from the carcasses and offal of sheep. Acting on this inference, the British government soon prohibited animal-based protein supplements in feed and the use of beef offal in food products: it also ordered the slaughter and disposal of all affected cattle. In 1989, Australia and the United States banned the importation of British beef, as did a number of European nations—briefly—in 1990 (reversing their policies after assurances from the British government that the epidemic was under control).

A disease of cattle, always a serious issue in the agricultural community, is not typically cause for alarm among the general population. Why now? The reason is that, from the day mad-cow disease was discovered, speculation arose that people might somehow catch it as well. For what is called mad-cow disease in cattle and scrapie in sheep has a human relative: Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD). All these deadly and incurable diseases, and others, fall under the banner of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, a name that derives from the action of the disease on brain tissue, which literally becomes riddled with holes and ultimately resembles nothing so much as a sponge.

In 1993 the British medical journal, the *Lancet*, proposed that the death of a farmer from CJD might have been caused by proximity to infected cattle. Soon thereafter, other reports began trickling in that hinted at a possible new form of CJD. Classic CJD, described as long ago as the 1920's by Hans G. Creutzfeldt and Alfons M. Jakob, had certain characteristics, among them that it appeared mostly in older patients. But this new form, named variant CJD (v-CJD), affected younger patients. Its emergence in the human population concurrent with the spread of BSE in cows sounded alarms in the epidemiological community—alarms that were quickly echoed, and amplified, in the press.

All along, Britain's then-Conservative government, fearing the potentially disastrous economic consequences of a nationwide beef scare, had downplayed

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any potential link between BSE and v-CJD. In 1990, Minister of Agriculture John Gummer displayed his confidence in British beef by feeding his four-year-old daughter a hamburger for all the world to see. But by March 1996, the unified Tory front had dissolved, and the tone of official pronouncements suggested that the government feared the possibility of a human epidemic. When Labor candidate Tony Blair was elected prime minister in May 1997, the previous government's handling of this issue was at least partly responsible for his landslide victory.

Today, the state of the British beef industry could hardly be worse. Since 1996, approximately 4.75 million cattle have been slaughtered by government decree, at a cost of $4 billion. (And that is only the direct cost; throughout Europe, butchers are being boycotted and beef consumption is plummeting.) Since these animals are not being consumed by humans, they must somehow be disposed of, and so, after the carcasses are processed into meal, the waste is burned. But Britain lacks the incinerator capacity to deal with the current rate of 25,000 incoming dead cattle a week, and there is thus no end in sight to the underlying problem. In the meantime, there is no safe harbor for British beef anywhere in the world. Countless farmers have lost both their herds and their livelihoods. And most tragically, as of this writing, 88 people—86 in Britain and two in France—have died from v-CJD.

But *does* BSE in cattle cause v-CJD in humans? One would think a responsible government would demand compelling evidence before undertaking so economically devastating a course of action as has Britain. Yet the evidence is for the most part circumstantial.

Most of the information regarding a BSE/v-CJD link comes from epidemiological studies. Because the most such studies can establish is a correlation, not a causal relationship, they are typically the least reliable form of scientific investigation. True, the correlation here is fairly straightforward and instinctively plausible: BSE came on the scene in the mid-1980's, v-CJD appeared in the human population in the mid-1990's. But several countervailing pieces of evidence cast doubt on a connection.

For one thing, vegetarians have contracted the disease. For another, among nonvegetarians who have contracted it, there is no way to be sure they ever ate the meat of infected animals. For still another, CJD normally takes quite a long time to incubate; unless a much shorter incubation period is posited, no current cases can be attributed to BSE.

There are other difficulties as well. Everybody who has thus far contracted the disease appears to display a particular genetic predisposition to it, which would certainly seem to be a limiting factor. It is also possible that, rather than constituting a new disease, v-CJD is merely a newly *discovered* disease. (One "cause" of v-CJD may thus have been the establishment of a national surveillance unit in 1990.) And even if the diseases are the same, it is possible that, rather than contracting the disease from cattle, humans have contracted it from swine or poultry, or that both humans and cattle have contracted it from some other source (like, some have suggested, the water), or that it is, like some illnesses, idiopathic (i.e., not "caught" from anywhere).

Because of the kinds of proof on which they rest, epidemiological studies are difficult to refute. But one way to put an epidemiological model to the test is to evaluate its predictive ability. And the most telling indictment of the epidemiological studies of BSE and v-CJD is that statistical projections from them have proved false. Repeatedly, confident predictions of hundreds of thousands or even millions of human deaths have had to be revised downward; models taking current facts into account place the total number in the hundreds, or at worst in the thousands. Yet these new predictions have received little media attention, and the same goes for the discovery that some early reported instances of the disease were actually CJD and not v-CJD.

Of course, excuses have been quick to follow. Perhaps, it is said, the gestation period is longer than previously assumed, or perhaps the disease is transmitted not through eating beef but through pharmaceutical gels made with animal ingredients (in which case the main cause has gone largely unregulated). Be that as it may, it is clear that we are not witnessing the rising curve of a human epidemic: although the numbers are too small for reliable statistical analysis, the rate of increase seems relatively flat.

That still leaves open the question of the nature of the disease. In the case of v-CJD, it is obviously difficult for medical researchers to study live humans who have contracted it naturally; the bulk of the information has come from autopsies. So in trying to trace the course of the illness in living beings the typical approach has been to conduct tests on specially bred rodents whose genetic makeups cause them to be somewhat indicative of human propensities.

The animal studies of the BSE/v-CJD link have cut both ways, with some indicating no transmissibility from animals to humans and others indicating that under certain extreme circumstances the disease can indeed perform the exceptional feat of "jumping the species barrier." Those extreme circumstances

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involve the direct injection of known infected tissue. But here is another difficulty: people are not likely to be exposed to such tissue through eating the meat even of infected cattle, since the locus of BSE is the central nervous system—the brain and spine—which are rarely if ever consumed.

Still another area of research, and the most important in terms of true understanding, is molecular analysis of the disease itself. This can potentially provide reasons rather than associations—and can also raise the prospect of a cure. When it comes to BSE and v-CJD, however, our comprehension remains decidedly blurry.

The transmissible spongiform encephalopathies constitute a medical enigma: there does not appear to be an identifiable bacterium or virus behind them. And so the prevailing theory in the scientific community is that they are caused by a mysterious infectious agent called a prion. A prion, we are told, is a rogue protein, found in the brain, which multiplies and accumulates in the nerve cells and leads to deadly neurodegeneration. Since proteins lack the strands of genetic material necessary for replication, the prion is quite a special case, multiplying not by replicating but by reorganizing other proteins.

Although early reactions to the prion theory dismissed it as science fiction, the possibility of a BSE/v-CJD link thrust the issue front and center, resulting in the 1997 award of a Nobel Prize to the American neurologist Stanley Ben Prusiner, who had discovered the prion in 1982 during studies of old-style CJD. Whether the prion model will ultimately prove correct is an open question, but, given that it was invented solely to explain a particular set of diseases and does not square with previous well-established models, it would be fair to treat it with some skepticism.

All in all, then, the evidence of a BSE/v-CJD link—especially one tied to human consumption of beef—remains firmly in the realm of speculation.

NEVERTHELESS, IN light of the lethality of BSE and v-CJD, would it not be wise to proceed with the utmost caution? Once a legitimate possibility of risk to humans is uncovered, should not the burden of proof be borne by the skeptics? After all, by the time science hands us a more compelling degree of proof, it may be too late.

This is the so-called "precautionary principle," very much in vogue among environmental and public-health lobbies in the Western industrialized nations. It is often invoked to dismiss doubters and to justify policies in advance of proof. And, stated as I have stated it here, it does indeed sound sensible. But is it?

The precautionary principle has two major flaws, one theoretical and one practical. First, by requiring that a hypothesis be disproved rather than proved, it turns on its head the normal process of scientific reasoning and testing—the tools to which we owe most of the advances of the past millennium. Besides, proving a negative is one of the trickiest propositions imaginable, since whatever evidence is adduced (for example, that there is no bacterium or virus that explains CJD) can be immediately countered by a fresh hypothesis (it is caused by a new type of molecule) that must be disproved in turn.

Second, *acting* on the precautionary principle disregards the most essential tool of government decision-making: the weighing of benefits against costs. For there is no such thing as a cost-free regulation, and each exercise of precaution exacts its toll.

Take, for example, an issue that has arisen in the United States, where there has not been a single recorded case of BSE or v-CJD: namely, the safety of our blood supply. If, the argument runs, there is a chance that BSE begets v-CJD, we must also worry that an American who has visited the United Kingdom may have come in contact with BSE-infected meat. And if the disease turns out to be transmitted by blood—though not even the epidemiological studies, much less the experimental ones, support such a conclusion—any American who has been a tourist in the United Kingdom becomes a potential carrier.

Following this chain of reasoning, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has prohibited anybody who has spent more than an arbitrary term of six months in the United Kingdom since 1980 from donating blood, and the American Red Cross has proposed expanding the ban to encompass other European nations and shorter time periods. This, at a time when the American blood supply is at dangerously low levels and the availability of blood for a patient in need can mean the difference between life and death. So on the one hand we have a hypothetical risk, and on the other hand we have a very real cost associated with addressing it. No rational cost-benefit analysis could justify the FDA's decision. Only politics could, and did.

In the United Kingdom, where 86 persons have died from v-CJD, the risks are somewhat more tangible even if causation remains in doubt. But even death, no matter how tragic, does not obviate the need to weigh costs and benefits. A zero-risk society is an impossibility, and to ignore the consequences of our actions is no more moral than to allow risks to go unaddressed. If we were to destroy an entire key industry every time several dozen people died from a disease potentially associated with it, civilization would grind to a halt.

The overall cost of an international response to the

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mad-cow disease crisis has been estimated as ranging from the tens of billions to the hundreds of billions of dollars. This raises still another question: could not those many billions—or even a minuscule proportion of them—be used in some other way to save more lives? The answer is certainly yes. It also seems incongruous to target one particular industry for drastic action when thousands of products (automobiles, airplanes, cigarettes, alcohol) causing *documented* and quantifiable deaths are allowed to be sold because their use is rightly considered a matter of informed consumer choice. It is a cruel enough irony that the main victims of the reaction to mad-cow disease have been hard-working farmers and butchers. The cruelest irony will be if the wholesale slaughter of cattle and the inability to dispose of their carcasses presents a greater disease risk than simply eating the meat and thereby disposing of a more manageable volume of waste.

Finally, it is one thing to destroy cattle known to have BSE; from the perspective of agricultural policy alone, that would make sense. It is another thing altogether to order the slaughter of millions of cattle that have never even been tested for the disease. Yet that is what we see happening in the United Kingdom today—perhaps the most expensive and disastrous exercise of the precautionary principle on record. With the panic currently spreading throughout Europe, and with variants of BSE and v-CJD having been found in many animal populations—not only sheep but squirrels, horses, mink, deer, antelope, cats, etc.—one wonders where the potential mayhem will end.

It is tempting simply to lump mad-cow disease with all the other health and environmental scares of the past few years that have turned out to be meritless or overstated: brain tumors caused by cellular phones, cancer caused by high-tension electrical wires, Alar in apples, breast implants, Gulf War Syndrome, the new Balkan War Syndrome, and risks from our homes, our water, and the very air we breathe. There are, indeed, many generic similarities to be noted, not least the political orientation of the interest groups that line up time and again behind every hint of an environmental or health scare. But mad-cow disease is a special case, not only because of the particularly devastating economic consequences of the reaction to it but also because of what that reaction says about the current state of the culture.

At least in the Western industrialized world, eating is no longer a simple issue of sustenance—it is now fraught with neurosis. Fad diets, fashionable eating disorders, perceived allergies, and food intolerances have become the norm on both sides of the Atlantic—as also has a rather militant form of vegetarianism. These phenomena no doubt stem in part from a newly emergent fear of food, encouraged not just by issues of body image (the standard explanation given by feminists) but also by a new breed of environmentalist asceticism and cultural Puritanism: witness the current hysteria in Europe over genetically modified foods. Fear is after all the lifeblood of the precautionary principle, its enemy being the enjoyment of life with its attendant risks.

But there is something else as well. Beef is not some luxury or inessential product, like a cellular phone, that people can take or leave. Especially in the United Kingdom and also in America, it is at the very core of both the food supply and the national consciousness. It is not for nothing that the British call themselves Beefeaters, or that the quality of British beef was long identified with the superiority of British soldiers, or that, from Julius Caesar to Charles Dickens, beef has been acknowledged as foundational to British society. The status of beef in American culture is nearly as significant. In either nation, an attack on beef is thus in part an attack on the social order.

Mad-cow disease touches not just on health fears, and not just on national identity, but also on the deepest strata of human taboo. It has often been observed that history's first recorded epidemic of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies came in the form of kuru, a disease among the Fore people of Papua New Guinea whose rituals involved the consumption of the brains of deceased members of the tribe. Would mad-cow disease, one wonders, have exhibited such poetic staying power were it not for the implicit suggestion of cannibalism that attends the consumption by animals of animal-based feed? And would fear of v-CJD have in turn proved so contagious were it not for the success of the vegetarian, animal-rights, anti-fast-food, and anti-agriculture lobbies (which are unusually powerful in Britain) in defining the very consumption of meat—if not the hedonistic enjoyment of food in general—as a new taboo? As "meat is murder" was the refrain yesterday, "meat bites back" is the refrain today.

There may be some comfort in the thought that issues like these have a way of fading into history. In his prophetic movie *Sleeper* (1973), Woody Allen plays a man who, after years in cryogenic freeze, awakens in a future where superior science has established that cigarettes and chocolate are good for you and that, conversely, foods thought to be healthy in the 20th century are actually carcinogenic. But it is hardly likely that BSE-infected beef will ever be determined to be healthy; and when the fears that have been mobilized are finally allayed, who will take responsibility for picking up the pieces?

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Postcards
A Story

Joseph Epstein

Hefferman stood in line at the post office, between an East Indian man with two large parcels wrapped in thick twine and an older black man wearing a White Sox cap and giving off an aroma of menthol lozenges. The line was long; he must have been in it for nearly ten minutes; and he regretted not having brought anything to read. By now, coming here on the first of every month, he was fairly familiar with the rhythm of the place. It was always a mistake to arrive near five, which he had done today, or at nine when it opened. Generally, Hefferman showed up at three, not long after the commodities market closed, on his walk from LaSalle Street to his apartment at 880 Lake Shore Drive. His order was always the same: two packets of stamps (for paying bills) and 20 plain, stamped postcards.

Hefferman had begun sending out anonymous cards nearly a year ago. Anonymous isn't quite accurate. He signed them with false names—usually, but not always, Jewish names. His second postcard had gone to a literary critic named Louis Binstock who had been given a prize by the American Academy of Arts and Letters. It was a two-liner:

> Dear Binstock,
>
> Congratulations on your award. A life of ass-kissing has not been lived in vain.

Hefferman signed the card Larry Goodman, with a Chicago return address. He tended to favor soft first names: Larry, Ronald, Teddy, Sheldon. The return addresses, like the names, he also made up.

Hefferman had a soft name himself. "Seymour Hefferman, the last Seymour in captivity," he would sometimes say when introducing himself. Something else he used to say, whenever anyone asked him where he'd gone to college, was "I was formerly very smart." Then he would explain that he had skipped two full years of elementary school and gone off to the University of Chicago at fifteen. It was in fourth grade at the Kilmer School that his teacher, a soft pink lady named Mrs. Murphy, had summoned his mother to tell her that her son's IQ had tested at 153.

"What's that mean?" Seymour remembered his mother asking.

"It means Seymour's a near genius," said Mrs. Murphy in a voice shimmering with significance.

"So if he's such a genius," his mother said, "how come his room's a pigsty?"

Hefferman never forgot that. Nor did he forget the number 153, which in later years he wished he had never heard.

The University of Chicago overstimulated Hefferman. In his second year there, at sixteen, he decided he wanted to be a poet. He never made it, or even came close. But he had caught the art bug, which for him meant that, next to being a writer, nothing else in life ever seemed worth taking seriously.

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The young Hefferman produced a vast amount of verse between his eighteenth and twenty-fourth years, an amount made all the more impressive by the fact that he never had a subject. He wrote sonnets, sestinas, villanelles (a killer, the villanelle), free verse, and verse practically bound, gagged, and chained in Italian and French forms, all expressing one thing: the yearning to be a poet. He went under the name S. I. Hefferman—Ira was his middle name. Even back then he knew that, though he might write with the divine touch of William Butler Yeats or Gerard Manley Hopkins, no one would ever read a poet named Seymour Hefferman. He submitted his poems to magazines that had more potential contributors than actual subscribers. Months would go by without a word, and when it finally came it was, inevitably, no.

Two years in the army, a year in law school at Northwestern, a stint as an architecture student at the Illinois Institute of Technology—finally Hefferman got a master's degree in English at Roosevelt University and took a few astonishingly useless courses in education to qualify for a high-school teaching certificate. That fizzled, too; teaching was not for him. He thought of moving to New York or California, but when his father became ill with cancer of the liver, he felt he couldn't leave his mother. For the four sad years of his father's dying he tried to sell real estate, consoling himself with the thought that Wallace Stevens had peddled insurance, though he knew Stevens wasn't a salesman but an attorney for one of the large Hartford firms. "A poet always cheats his boss" was the Russian proverb that Hefferman muttered to himself when knocking off early at a house-showing in Skokie or Morton Grove. But the problem was that, nearing thirty, he had begun to cease to think himself a poet. He wasn't exactly anything.

With the money his father left him, Hefferman bought a seat on the commodities exchange. There he met all sorts of hustlers, whose unrelenting aggressiveness first impressed and then mildly depressed him. Still, he had studied the market with some care before buying his seat and discovered a way of making a decent living—75 grand or so a year, not bad for a guy still single—if he hedged his bets carefully and restrained himself from taking the plunge on wheat or pork bellies or something else about which, like everyone else on LaSalle Street, he knew not a thing but its paper value at the end of the day. His earnings allowed him to spend a month each year traveling in Europe and to buy a one-bedroom apartment in a stern glass-and-steel Mies van der Rohe building on the Outer Drive facing the lake.

Living in his detached way, Hefferman had little social life: no close friends, no lengthy relationships with women. In his thirties and forties he went out with a number of divorcées; now, in his late fifties, graying and a bit paunchy, he was up to young widows. Somehow, he couldn't quite take women seriously—the art bug again—and he wasn't altogether sorry to sense a diminishment in his once quite insistent appetites in this department.

The last time he'd brought a woman to dinner at his mother's apartment, he told his mother afterward that he wasn't much interested in her. "Don't be so choosy, Seymour," his mother replied. "You're no great beauty, you know." Ah, thought Hefferman, it's just as Freud said, a man confident of his mother's love is truly a conqueror.

ALTHOUGH HAVING long since ceased to write any verse, Hefferman retained his interest in it. He was by now a forty-odd-year subscriber to *Poetry* magazine, and he also took the *New York Review of Books*, the *New Yorker*, COMMENTARY, *Hudson Review*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *London Review of Books*, the *American Scholar*, the *New Criterion*, and five or six other magazines. Through these, and occasional dips into the Internet, he kept up on current academic disputes, the culture wars, the announcements of genius grants, the whole goofy literary and intellectual life of his time in which he himself took no part whatsoever. He had long ago decided that it wasn't such a great time.

As for the postcards, the very first one he sent wasn't to a poet or novelist or critic but to a guy on the commodities exchange named Marvin Feldstein. One day, in the men's room for members, Hefferman had noticed this Feldstein taking great care with his outrageous comb-over hairdo: carefully maneuvering the lengthy, oily strands from below his right ear all the way over leftwise to cover his wide bald head, patting them into place with an arc-like motion of the hand before extracting a can of hair spray from his attaché case and firing away. It was pathetic, or might have been had Feldstein not been one of the most aggressive guys out on the floor, where he acted as if he were under the boards at a pro basketball game. Hefferman thought about it and thought about it and then one day sent him an unsigned postcard.

Dear Marvin,

A word about your hairdo: that word is Preposterous. You may not be aware that this same

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hairdo is the cause of much mirth among your colleagues down on the floor. Whatever else you do, please do not abandon it; it brings too much gaiety to the grimness of our daily grind.

Within a week, Feldstein showed up on the floor properly bald and, if not less aggressive, just a touch, or so Hefferman thought, less confident.

With this small victory he turned his attention to culture, and, starting with the poison-pen note to the critic Binstock, he was off and running. He had begun to think a great deal less of Ravinia, Chicago's summer music festival, ever since it had been taken over by a small German conductor who wore a white tunic and hopped about on the podium. He decided to send him a postcard.

Dear Maestro,

How regrettable that as a conductor you turn out to be what a French writer on music called "one of those good dancers!" Your antics, great jackanapes-like, enormously increase your general grotesqueness. A mistake, I think, in every way. Stick to the music, kid; and while you're at it, my advice is to knock off the tunics.

Sincerely,
Ronald Landesman

A famous poet, who a decade earlier had announced the onset of cancer, had filled the intervening years with all sorts of poems and essays about his approaching death. Meanwhile, though, the creep stayed alive; even his wife had predeceased him. At this rate, so would Hefferman. A postcard was in order.

Dear Cancer Victim,

Don't you owe your readers—not to speak of many editors—your life? It would be one thing if your imminent demise had been announced by someone else, but since you yourself promised it, don't you feel you ought to make good? Do consider pegging out before too much longer.

Sincerely,
Sandy Cohn

When a now elderly and formidably boring teacher of his from the University of Chicago wrote a book about playing the viola in amateur string quartets, Hefferman, warming to his task as the Zorro of culture, seated himself before his laptop:

My dear *dottore*,

My idea of hell is you playing your viola while simultaneously lecturing on any aspect whatsoever of English literature. The thought of you scratching away for nearly 50 years on your oversized fiddle makes me pity your wife.

Be merciful and give her surcease.

Sincerely,
Anson Ginsberg

ONCE FULLY into the swing, Hefferman found himself writing three or four or even five postcards a week. Such was the quality of the culture, there was never any shortage of recipients. When an elderly novelist produced, not for the first time, a book excoriating his previous wife, Hefferman saddled up:

Yo, Bluebeard,

Time—no?—to stop using literature as a means of paying off old resentments, imagined wounds, petty injustices way too deeply felt. Time, too, to stop insisting on the largeness of your soul. Now that your prostate must be almost as imposing as your ego, why not ease back into the gentle solipsism of old age?

None of the best,
Myron Hausman

To a critic who wrote a wonderfully self-serving article in the Sunday *New York Times* in defense of the blacklisted Hollywood screenwriters, Hefferman shot off another missive:

Dear Sir,

It must be lonely for you, taking the courageous positions you do. Lonely, that is, what with the red hordes to your Left, the black hundreds to your Right, and only one good man—that would be you, Jughead—in the middle.

Hang in there,
Lenny Pomeranz

Another critic, a terrific operator, wrote regularly about the Jews, availing himself of a "we" that Hefferman disliked above all pronouns in contemporary writing. When a piece by this critic appeared in the *New Republic*, giving the Israelis all sorts of moral advice strewn with quotations from Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Walter Benjamin, Hefferman booted up again:

Josephus,

What'll it take for you to quit writing about the Jews? I think I could get you a million bucks from prominent Americans who feel the same way I do. If you'll throw in a promise never to mention the Holocaust again—vas you dere, Charlie?—I'm sure the ante would rise still higher.

Shalom,
Lee Schwartz

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ALL IN all, thought Hefferman, not a bad week's work. The week that followed likewise began promisingly enough, with a scorching card to a novelist who, starting out as a chronicler of the miseries of contemporary Jewish life, had gone on to produce a pornographic bestseller, much cut-rate Kafka, and considerable diddling with the melding of autobiography and fiction. Ah, thought Hefferman, reading a typically approving review of the novelist's most recent production—the guy had lately adopted the mode of high moral dudgeon—time to put on mask and black shirt and ride out:

Dear Moral Leader,

As a simple American, Midwest version, may I be permitted to apologize to you on behalf of all our countrymen for having let you down? Hard, I realize, to rise to your standard of moral equipoise as the self-acknowledged legislator of mankind. But does the world really need a pornographic Polonius? Don't believe it does.

As ever,
Sherwin Skulnik

In the same issue of the *New York Times Book Review*, Hefferman also read an interview with a woman, a short-story writer associated with feminist causes, in which she expressed her worries about turning fifty and facing the prospect of growing old alone. Hefferman cleared his screen for action:

Dear Ms. R,

I read with great empathy the interview in today's *NYTBR*. I wonder if it has occurred to you that you and your feminist pals have done everything possible to make yourselves disagreeable and unattractive—and *now* you worry about being alone. Isn't this a bit like the young man who murdered his parents and then threw himself on the mercy of the court as an orphan? Think upon it, sweetie.

Fondly,
Stu Jabowitz

Later that evening, hours after he'd mailed the card, Hefferman got a terrible, creepy feeling that—having put the card in with a stack of bills he was paying—he may have affixed to it a label bearing his real name and address. He spent a difficult night, trying to remember what *exactly* he had done, and in the morning rose from his bed absolutely sure. What a screw-up!, he thought. Gigantic!

He'd had an exceptionally good week in the market—made, for him, a small killing in beets. But that couldn't take his mind off the telltale label. He stopped sending out postcards. Returning each evening to his apartment, he ran through the day's mail with nervous fingers. Whenever the phone rang, his heart leapt with dread. A week went by, then another, and then a full month. She must, he assumed, have treated the card as the work of a crank, and tossed it away with a sneer. Relieved, he turned again to his solitary pleasure. He began by shooting off a note to a man who at a youthful age had been named president of a small college in New York State and later turned up as a conductor—apparently a damned poor one—of an orchestra for which he had been able to raise funds.

Dear Leonardo,

I address you as Leonardo because you are truly a Renaissance man. The only problem is that, with your third-rate college, your hopeless conducting, your many fatuous statements about education and the state of the world, you, kiddo, give the Renaissance a bad name. Do consider taking an early pension and retiring to a St. Helena of your own choosing, where we shall hear no more of your passionately expressed banalities.

Cordially,
Lyle Futterman

A model of the form, if he did say so himself: first drawing in this monstrous egotist with what appeared to be a compliment, then letting the air out before finishing with a flourish of stylish invective. Was he on to a new genre here: the brief blast, the vivid vituperation? A shame, Hefferman thought, that he hadn't kept a copy of everything he'd sent—there must be more than a hundred by now, almost enough to make a short book, a dirty little dormer window on the age.

Then one day, after a negligible session at the board of trade, Hefferman returned to his apartment, went through his mail—catalogues and bills—checked his e-mail, and listened to his voice mail. There were two messages. One was from his mother: "Hello, stranger. Haven't heard from you in four days. Call when you get a chance." Then a new voice came on, cultivated, and very chill. "Mr. Hefferman, I recently returned from London to a most unpleasant postcard signed by a man named Jabowitz. I have received more than my share of hate mail, but your ugly little message was something special, distinguished by what I would call a disinterested malice, or perhaps dementia is the more precise word. I shall be in Chicago on the weekend of May 30-31, and I plan to call on you. I

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am very eager to learn what sort of lunatic would do so deliberately cruel a thing."

The caller did not give her name, but, then, she didn't have to.

Hefferman sat there trembling. He felt like a child, caught out at some mischievous and quite unexplainable act. He remembered sitting thus nearly fifty years ago on a bench outside the principal's office after he had kicked open a wooden locker in seventh grade because he couldn't get his combination lock to work, knowing there was going to be hell to pay yet hoping somehow to escape deep humiliation.

Outside the screaming commodities exchange, Hefferman led a quiet life. He had no taste for direct confrontation. What would he do when she called? He thought nervously of changing his phone number, of moving, of leaving the city for a few months. He thought, yearningly, of the federal witness-protection program. He imagined himself living in a motel outside Tucson, opening the front door cautiously for the morning paper, driving a gray Chevy, wearing plaid pants and solid-color golf shirts. He would call himself Jack Jacobs, or Jim Edwards, maybe Bob Simmons—nothing like his habitual aliases. He had to shake his head at his own nuttiness.

"*Du calme*," he said to himself, "*du calme*." The words, from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, were the advice given to Marlow by a physician in Belgium for how to survive in the Congo. Hefferman often invoked them as a mantra on the floor of the exchange when things were going wild and he felt like taking the plunge on soy beans or corn. "*Du calme, du calme*." He wished he had kept a copy of the offending postcard; by now he could remember only the pleasure he'd taken in its composition, a pleasure now thoroughly blown away.

He went to Border's to gaze upon the photograph of Ms. Andrea Rubin on the dustjacket of her latest book. Unsmiling, she seemed every bit the more than mildly depressed moralist she had seemed in her interview. Slender, with a high forehead, she also looked to be tall. Hefferman himself was 5'9" if he stood up straight. He hoped she wasn't taller; if a confrontation there must be, he didn't want her looking down on him.

Keep your perspective, kid, Hefferman told himself. You weren't *wrong* to send those postcards. Someone needs to tell these jerks how wildly pretentious they are. And so, taking his courage in hand, he sat down and wrote back to her, suggesting that when she was in Chicago they meet at a coffee shop in Hefferman's neighborhood. The place was tucked away in the lobby of a hotel, and the tables were set close: not much room to cause a scene, he thought, not that much room was needed.

At his computer, Hefferman composed his letter:

Ms. Andrea Rubin
c/o Farrar, Straus & Giroux
19 Union Square West
New York, N.Y. 10003

Dear Ms. Rubin,

Yes, I am the man who sent you that postcard. I did it for a reason. Enough is enough and enough has already arrived. No one wants to hear any more about the loneliness of the modern writer. You and your friends have made Akim Tamiroffs of us all: we don't, that is, any longer provoke. If you would like to talk about this further, I'll be waiting for you in the coffee shop in the Knickerbocker Hotel, on Walton off Michigan Avenue, at noon on Saturday, May 30. I'll recognize you from your unsmiling book-jacket photograph. I'll be wearing a yellow sweater. Can't say I look forward to it all that much, but I'll be there.

Hefferman signed the letter with his real name, sealed it, and quickly walked it down to the mailbox before he could change his mind. Pushing the letter down the chute, he spoke another of his mantras, this one Harry Truman's words to his weeping White House staff after announcing he would not seek re-election. "Calm down," Truman said, "and stay on the job."

AT 11:45, he took a seat at a table for two near the window. As a precaution—in case he got cold feet—he was wearing a dark blue sweater instead of a yellow one. The blue also made him look less paunchy. He ordered a cup of coffee. By 12:15, she had not yet shown up. Hefferman decided to give her another five minutes before cutting out.

And then he saw her turn off Walton Street and pass through the hotel's revolving door. *Du calme*, Seymour, *du calme*. She wasn't tall but short, small-boned, petite. She was wearing a tan jacket over a soft white blouse, and dark pleated trousers that made her legs seem long; her dark hair, streaked with silvery-gray, was pulled back, showing her forehead to good effect.

From his table Hefferman watched as she searched the room. The young Chinese hostess asked if she would like a table. Taking three deep breaths—calm down, Seymour, and stay on the job—he walked up to the front of the restaurant.

"Seymour Hefferman," he said, not offering a

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hand to shake. "I've got a table near the window."

"I was looking for a yellow sweater," she said with some irritation when they were both seated.

"When I went to put it on, I discovered it had a coffee stain," Hefferman said. "Sorry."

The young waiter was upon them, passing out menus, asking if they wanted anything to drink. She ordered iced tea, Hefferman already had his coffee.

"So," she began with a nicely controlled smile, "when did you first discover you were a maniac?"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"What would you call a person who sends insulting postcards that he doesn't sign with his own name? Is this your notion of sane behavior? Do you do it often?"

"Now that you ask: fairly often, yes," Hefferman said. "Every opportunity I can find."

"Oh, really," she said. "Say a little more, please."

"What're you, a therapist?"

"Sounds to me as if you could use one."

"Nothing crazy about it," Hefferman said. "I've taken it as my duty to tell people in the culture business when they are out of line—usually way out of line. I figure they can stand a little shot of truth now and then. Where else are they going to get it? From editors, publishers, agents, critics? I don't think so."

"Really?" she said, an eyebrow going up.

The waiter arrived with her iced tea and took their orders: a Caesar salad for her, for him a hamburger, medium rare, with a slice of onion, grilled.

"Yes," Hefferman continued. "After nearly 40 years of observation, I happen to believe that most people who get involved with the arts lose their grip on reality, so it's not entirely a bad thing for them to know that someone in the world out there is watching them. Not Big but Little Brother, maybe."

"You have some examples, perhaps?," she said, lifting the tall glass with her slender fingers. No ring on her left hand, Hefferman noted.

"How about you? You publish a book. I assume your publisher arranges an interview to help promote it. Somehow, in the midst of this interview, you begin to rattle on about your personal anxieties, or about the painfulness of the writer's life. I mean, what makes you think anyone but you—and possibly your widowed aunt—could conceivably care?"

"Has it never occurred to you that writers represent something larger than themselves? That they often have feelings in advance of other people?"

"Chief among them is the feeling of selfish egotism, I'd say. I wouldn't want any of my children to marry a writer."

"Oh, you have children?"

"As it happens, I don't."

"Then I'd say your worries are over. Have you at least been married?"

"Nope."

"I gather you're not somebody who has taken many chances. I'm beginning to see why you get such pleasure out of writing those anonymous cards. You're desperately in need of a hobby."

THE FOOD arrived. Hefferman's hamburger was rarer than he liked and the onion wasn't grilled; he thought about sending it back, but this wasn't a good time to make a fuss.

"You're not married yourself, I take it," he said.

"Not at present." She ate her salad in the European manner, fork in left hand, knife in right; did it rather well, actually. "My ex-husband, who is a poet, Stephen Ludlow by name, left me for one of his students five years ago. I have two children, daughters, twelve and ten, Emily and Sarah."

Hefferman quickly pictured this all-female household: a crowded apartment on the West Side of Manhattan, mother scuffling to make a go of things, keeping up standards, supplying little touches of elegance on a limited budget, chasing after some bearded *shtunk* for child support. He felt a flash of pity.

"Not much of a poet, Stephen Ludlow," said Hefferman, who kept a vast catalogue of writers in his head. Ludlow belonged to the school of what he thought of as the falsely sensitives: tough guys, all soft inside. He recalled poems about childhood basketball games at the local playground, about a sister lost when she was six years old, then a series of dull sonnets about engagements with the paintings of the French Impressionists—the usual crap.

"An even worse husband, let me assure you. But he did give me two charming daughters."

"Emily and Sarah are solid names. I'm glad you didn't name them after lamps, Tiffany and Britanny or some such madness. But what're you doing in Chicago?"

"There's a conference on teaching creative writing, which is what I do at Bard."

"A conference on teaching creative writing. Sounds to me like not dying but going to hell anyway."

"You have a lot of opinions."

"I do."

"All of them strong?"

"I have strong opinions weakly held," Hefferman said. "Do you know Chicago?"

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"Not really."

"If you're free tomorrow, I can show it to you—that is, if you don't mind the company of a maniac." As soon as the offer was out of his mouth, Hefferman wondered why he'd made it. But it was too late now.

"I live in New York, I see maniacs all the time. Sure, why not. My flight home's not until Monday morning. But I won't be free till four o'clock or so. Better make it five."

"I'll pick you up at . . . where?"

"I'm at the Hilton."

"I'll meet you in front of the Hilton at five."

DRIVING DOWN Michigan Boulevard, Hefferman wondered what he was up to. After their lunch he had gone over to Border's and bought a copy of *The Estranged Cello*, her collection of short stories, which he began reading that night and finished in the morning. Now he pulled his Audi ahead of the cab line and spotted her standing at the Hilton's large front entrance. She was wearing tan pants, a blue-striped blouse, a red sweater crossed over her shoulders. He honked, stopped, got out of the car to open the door for her.

"For a madman," she said, "you have nice manners."

"For a woman whose ideas are calculated to scare off men, you dress well. I thought I'd show you the University of Chicago, where I went to school as a kid, then maybe dinner in Chinatown afterward. Sound O.K.?"

"Fine," she said. "But what should we call each other?"

"Why don't I call you Pro, short for professor, also for professional complainer?"

"Excellent. And why don't I call you Manny, short for maniac?"

"I can live with that," Hefferman said.

The Outer Drive was crowded with Sunday traffic. He did the tour-director bit, pointing out the Field Museum, the Shedd Aquarium, the Adler Planetarium, Soldier Field, off in the distance to the west the wretched public-housing project called the Robert Taylor Homes.

"Named after the actor?" she asked.

"More likely after some 280-pound alderman from the 30's," Hefferman answered.

Passing the lugubrious Museum of Science and Industry, they got to Hyde Park and he found a parking space on Woodlawn across from the Robie house. She studied the sleek Frank Lloyd Wright building with great intensity.

"It looks like an aircraft carrier," she said. "It deserves a better setting. Water nearby, maybe."

They walked up 58th Street, past the Oriental Institute, the tennis courts, and into the main quadrangle, Hefferman naming the significant buildings as they passed. The place looked beautiful in the late spring afternoon, the lawns manicured, lots of flowers. Few students were about; a pock-pock sound came from an older man and woman rallying tennis balls. The gray gothic buildings seemed solid, substantial, not as menacing as they loomed in memory.

"You're seeing the place at its very best," Hefferman said. "In winter, it can feel very heavy, hide-the-razor-blades heavy if you know what I mean."

"I can imagine," she said. "It must have seemed pretty daunting to you when you were a student."

Hefferman explained that he was fifteen when he began. "All the teachers seemed to have *Mittel*-European accents: Hitler's gift to American higher education. Graduate-school and professional-school students dominated. Undergraduates were strictly a minority, in every sense. Yet somehow the spirit of the place got through to me even as a kid, coming out of a lower-middle-class home where nobody read anything heavier than *Life* magazine."

"What did you get out of it?" she asked.

"The idea that the life of the mind was the only life, and that everything else was trivial, without point. You had to be an artist or a scientist, or maybe a statesman—or, at a second remove, a teacher of artists, scientists, or statesmen. Otherwise you were worthless, a cipher."

"So how come you never became any of those things?"

"I thought for a while about being a poet. I even gave it a fairly good shot, but then I realized that it wasn't in me. I didn't have it." Hefferman looked away as he said this.

They walked around the quadrangle. He took her into the Reynolds Club, the school's modest student union. He showed her where the handball court used to be, where they first split the atom.

"What I find hard to imagine," she said, "is the fifteen-year-old Manny in this setting. Very weird."

"When I think back on it, I guess it was, Pro, but what can I tell you?"

"You can tell me how soon we're going to eat. I'm starved."

In Chinatown, Hefferman took her to the Emperor's Choice, where he knew the menu and where the owner's wife, a heavyset woman, greeted him from behind the small bar where she sat watching television. During dinner he questioned

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her about what it was like raising two girls without a father in Manhattan. He'd guessed correctly about her not having much money. At the end of the meal, after the check and the fortune cookies, she asked if he had ever read any of her stories.

"I spent last night and this morning with your most recent collection."

After a brief but embarrassed silence that was supposed to be filled by his praise of her work, she asked, "What did you think of them?"

Hefferman hesitated, then resolved to risk the truth. One of the things he prided himself on was never disguising his opinions about art.

"Very well written," he said, "elegant, even. But women's stories, if you know what I mean."

"No," she said, stiffening. "What do you mean?"

"All sensitivity and sensibility. Everything tending toward the small, oblique insight. Epiphanies, I believe you call them in the business. Expertly done, no question about that. But I prefer stories in which someone has to make a decision, if you know what I mean, a big decision, something crucial."

Her lips grew thin. "Odd that your taste runs to stories of that kind," she said. "I mean, since you yourself seem to have made so few big decisions in your life."

HEFFERMAN WAS about to pantomime the gesture of pulling an arrow out of his chest but stopped himself. Being truthful had probably been a mistake. It usually was. He took two twenties out of his wallet, dropped them on the table, and got up. She did, too.

"Have nice night," the owner's wife said as they left the restaurant.

The drive back, ten minutes down State Street, took place in utter silence. Pulling up in front of the Hilton, Hefferman once again got out to open her door but she beat him to it. Standing on the curb, she put out her hand.

"Thank you," she said, coldly, "it's been an instructive evening."

"Look," Hefferman said, "I'm sorry if I was out of line. Will you forgive me? Please?"

"Don't worry about it," she said, and turned into the hotel.

Back at his apartment, which he had straightened up earlier, thinking—who knew?—that if things worked out, he might bring Ms. Rubin home, might even get lucky (some joke that seemed now), Hefferman switched on the television and sat in his reading chair, hoping to catch a game. The Sox were playing at Oakland, but after ten minutes or so he found it couldn't keep his interest. He got up. Looking down from the large windows of his apartment on the 26th floor to the dark immensity of Lake Michigan below, he suddenly knew, as he had never quite known until this moment, that he would live out his days alone.

Jesus, Hefferman thought, what am I having here, a goddamn epiphany? His IQ of 153, his impressive education, his case of the art bug—could it be that all this was what put him, as Andrea Rubin so rightly saw, outside the realm of big decisions? Was the best he could hope for in life represented by these small, slanting insights, most of which arrived too late to do him any good?

Well, if little epiphanies were to be his lot, so be it. In the meantime, he thought, let me continue to send out a few of my own. That very morning, in the *New York Times*, a poet, a renowned shyster operating out of the University of Houston, had published a suck-up review of a book by a powerful female literary critic known for making and breaking reputations. The critic's initials were H.V., and the poets she praised were known in the trade as HV-positive. Hefferman sat himself before his computer, and—Rosinante, to the road again—booted up:

Mr. Deep Integrity,

Noted your review in this a.m.'s *NYTBR*, which reveals you to be much more than the simple two-faced boy most of your readers have taken you for till now. Hope you've laid in a good supply of lip balm. Without it, friend, you'll be out of business.

Most sincerely,
Les Blumenthal

Tapping in the date—May 31—Hefferman made a mental note to stop at the post office tomorrow for another 20 postcards.

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OBSERVATIONS

Does the Jewish Vote Count?

Jay P. Lefkowitz

GIVEN THE amount of attention lavished on their role in last year's presidential contest, one might easily conclude that American Jews—a mere 2.2 percent of the population—exert a disproportionate influence on the outcome of elections.

The beginning of the post-primary election season witnessed Al Gore's selection of Senator Joseph Lieberman as his running mate, marking the first time in American history that a Jew had been invited to serve on a major party's national ticket. This elicited a wave of discussion, not only about whether the presence of Lieberman would help or hurt Gore's candidacy but also about Lieberman's own, traditionalist brand of religion and how it might or might not impinge on the performance of his official duties—and it provoked an even larger wave of self-congratulation within the Jewish community about how far Jews had come in American life. Then, at the end of the campaign season, as the Florida imbroglio unfolded, Jews became something of a focal point once again as some Jewish voters claimed to have been disenfranchised by a poorly designed ballot and as media analysts wondered whether other Jewish voters—legal residents of Florida living temporarily or permanently in Israel—were numerous enough to tip the election balance. In between these two punctuating events, the major candidates addressed a variety of issues of direct concern to Jewish voters, from the pace of the Oslo "peace process" and the location of the American embassy in Israel to a pardon for the convicted spy Jonathan Pollard.

Yet if the 2000 election was a high-water mark for discussion of matters Jewish, it is by no means clear that it represented a positive mark of any kind for Jewish electoral influence; rather, if anything, the reverse.

FOR DECADES, politicians at every level have courted American Jews with extraordinary care. With their population concentrated in such key battleground states as Florida, California, Illinois, and New York, and with a proud history of turning out to vote in large numbers, they are said to be capable of tipping the outcome of closely fought races. Tipping them, that is, mostly toward the Democratic column: for, at least as far as presidential elections are concerned, the Jewish vote in the key states, as elsewhere, has seldom been truly up for grabs. Rather, the majority of Jews have almost always voted for the Democratic presidential candidate, they have done so by a far greater margin than the electorate at large, and they are exceeded in this only by one group—American blacks.

The Jewish community's attachment to the Democratic party can be traced back to the New Deal and even beyond. In the days when there was still a substantial Jewish lower class, and when middle-class Jews were regularly kept out of private schools, country clubs, and even many residential neighborhoods, American Jews had no doubt that they were underdogs, and they embraced the party perceived as the champion of the underdog and of ethnic minorities. The Republicans, by contrast, who in their earlier days

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as the party of Lincoln had succeeded in attracting Jewish support, had by then come into their latter-day image as the champions of the complacent white majority and the complacent rich, and as harboring more than a fair share of anti-Semites. (Neither stereotype was altogether accurate, but that is another matter.)

After World War II, as American Jews became more integrated into American life both economically and socially, a new issue came to the fore: the survival of the nascent state of Israel. Beginning with the 1948 election of Harry Truman, who had earned the gratitude of the Jewish community for extending early diplomatic recognition to Israel, a predominant focus of Jewish political concern became a candidate's position on the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Here once again Democrats enjoyed an edge, often winning the trust of Jewish voters—and keeping it—no matter how frosty or indifferent they might become to Israel once they were actually in office. By this time, in any case—that is, the 50's and 60's—Jews were showing every sign of having become wedded to the liberal agenda in everything from race relations to economic policy, and it would have taken a major dereliction on the part of a candidate or officeholder to dislodge their allegiance to the Democratic party.

THAT DERELICTION came in the person of Jimmy Carter. In 1976, Carter had managed to unseat Gerald Ford with a respectable 65 percent of the Jewish vote. But in his re-election effort four years later, Carter succeeded in attracting only 45 percent of Jewish voters, while Ronald Reagan garnered 39 percent and the third-party candidate, John Anderson, picked up the balance.

Echoing the broader political sentiment, many Jews were aghast at the general disarray Carter had managed to engender in four short years. But on top of this, Carter was perceived as personally unsympathetic to Israeli leaders and to Israel's strategic situation, and several months before election day the Carter administration compounded its difficulties by voting in favor of a flagrantly anti-Israel resolution in the UN Security Council.

And so the 1980 election became the only instance since the early 20th century in which the Democratic candidate failed to win a majority of the Jewish vote. At the time, some commentators viewed this as a sign that the Jewish attachment to liberalism in general might be weakening. And it is true that, first in 1984 and then again in 1988, Reagan and George Bush did better with Jewish voters—both managed to pierce the 30-percent mark—than had most of their Republican predecessors. But by 1992, in his race against Bill Clinton, Bush's numbers had sharply declined.

Once again, the issue was Israel. Bush himself had engaged in what many Jews believed were unveiled and unfriendly references to Jewish voters, describing himself in the battle over loan guarantees for Israel as "one lonely man" up against "powerful political forces"; and James Baker, his Secretary of State, was widely considered to be inimical to the Jewish state. Still another disincentive for Jews thinking of pulling the Republican lever was the invitation extended to Patrick J. Buchanan, a spokesman for isolationism—and, many thought, anti-Semitism—to address the Republican national convention as a keynote speaker. In the end, very few did pull that lever; Bush received a paltry 11 percent of the Jewish vote.

AGAINST THIS background, the contest between Al Gore and George W. Bush in November of last year merely extends a familiar pattern. According to exit polls, Gore received 79 percent of the Jewish vote, Bush 19. While this was better than the elder Bush had done against Clinton in 1992, or than Bob Dole had done against Clinton in 1996 (16 percent), the younger Bush's relative "success" can be attributed partly to the fact that he was more popular with the overall electorate than either his father or Dole, and partly to the fact that in the 1992 and 1996 elections the third-party candidate Ross Perot siphoned off more Jewish votes than Ralph Nader (an Arab-American) did in 2000.

In one key respect, moreover, the Democratic lock on the Jewish vote may be considered even stronger than before. With the long-term decline in domestic anti-Semitism, concern for the security of the state of Israel had remained the single issue that could theoretically sway large numbers of Jewish voters from the Democrats. But in the 1990's, thanks in large measure to the Middle East "peace process," Israelis themselves would become bitterly divided over what their security demanded, and over what sort of political future they envisioned for their country. These deep political cleavages in Israel, which seem to have survived even the shock of the latest *intifada*, have also gone some way toward shattering the American Jewish consensus on the proper role of the United States in the Middle East, and in particular about which U.S. policies are "good" or "bad" for the Jewish state.

Thus, Bill Clinton, who already benefited from a reputation of friendliness to Jews and Jewish interests, remained immensely popular among American Jews even as his administration pressured Israel into making concessions that not so long ago would have been considered undiscussable and unthinkable. And this accumulated political capital, especially when put next to the long-standing Jewish devotion to the liberal agenda—and, on the other side, the lingering Jewish apprehensions concerning anyone carrying the name of Bush—certainly redounded to the advantage enjoyed with Jewish voters by Clinton's Vice President.

IN SUM, absent the Israel issue—and even that is not so simple as it

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once was— Jewish voters seem as frozen as ever in their twin predilection for liberal positions and Democratic candidates. At least, so it would seem on the national level. On the local level, things are a little more interesting.

As Murray Friedman has documented in these pages,* more than a few Republicans around the country have managed in recent years to gain office by forging coalitions that include significant elements of Jewish support. This is especially true in cities. Richard Riordan, for example, won 71 percent of the Jewish vote in his 1997 race for mayor of Los Angeles; Bob Lanier won 70 percent of the Jewish vote in his 1991 race for mayor of Houston; and Rudolph Giuliani won 75 percent of the Jewish vote in his 1997 race for mayor of New York City, defeating a Jewish opponent.

Friedman attributes this development to a variety of factors, socioeconomic and demographic at once, that have combined to render many Jews somewhat more conservative—i.e., more like other Americans of their general social and economic profile—on issues like crime, public order, and even affirmative action, while remaining quite unbudgeably liberal on such issues as abortion, gay rights, and the separation of church and state. What this adds up to is that, if Rudolph Giuliani had been able to complete his run for the Senate in New York against Hillary Clinton, we would have had an almost pristine laboratory contest pitting, in Friedman's words, "a woman who embodie[d] many of the classical liberal ideas to which American Jews have long pledged their allegiance against a man who expresse[d] most saliently the particular combination of new ideas with which many of those same American Jews have recently become comfortable."

It was not to be; instead, Hillary Clinton's opponent was the lackluster Rick Lazio. Even so, however, she faced some seemingly formidable obstacles in New York. For one thing, over the years she had acquired a reputation as a supporter less of Israel than of a Palestinian state, a reputation that was reinforced just as her campaign was getting under way by the kiss she bestowed on Suha Arafat after listening to her deliver a speech accusing Israel of employing toxic gas against Arab children. For another thing, even though New York is among the more liberal states in the nation, it contains several sizable pockets of very religious Jews who tend to be conservative on the very social issues where their fellow Jews (and Mrs. Clinton) are most liberal, and who therefore seemed unlikely to support her no matter what her position on Israel. And for yet another thing, in the closing weeks of her campaign, it was disclosed that Mrs. Clinton had received large contributions from an American Muslim group with ties to Middle East terrorism. (Her campaign returned the money.)

Just to complicate matters, Mrs. Clinton proceeded to defy a piece of political wisdom in New York that has long had the status of an article of faith. This is that, with Jews comprising some 14 percent of the state's electorate, a Democrat who fails to carry the Jewish vote by a large margin cannot win. Former state attorney general Robert Abrams, for example, lost a Senate race to Al D'Amato in 1992 when he managed to take "only" 59 percent of the Jewish vote. Charles Schumer, by contrast, unseated D'Amato by garnering 76 percent of the Jewish vote. Daniel P. Moynihan, for his part, amassed huge margins among Jewish voters over the course of his four terms in the Senate (reaching 87 percent in 1994), making his seat exceedingly safe.

As for Mrs. Clinton, though she made all the requisite campaign appearances and appeals for support, especially financial, her strategy was never really directed at the Jewish community, except in the limited sense of engaging in damage control. Instead, it was aimed much more directly at energizing the Jesse Jackson-Al Sharpton coalition—and with impressive results. She garnered 90 percent of the black vote, 84 percent of the Hispanic vote, and 95 percent of the Muslim vote. In the event, these margins were large enough to outweigh the relatively pallid 53 percent she gained from Jews, surely a record low among successful Democratic Senate candidates from New York.

WHAT IS the lesson? In part, it is that Jews are not needed for political victory. But in part, it is also that their reflexive liberalism, especially on the social issues, will lead sizable numbers of them to vote Democratic no matter what. For the most striking fact of the New York vote is not that so many Jews deserted Hillary Clinton but that despite her liabilities she still ended up with more than 50 percent of their ballots. A good many Jews still see themselves as committed first and foremost to the liberal agenda, and will support a candidate who speaks for that agenda even if her attitude toward Israel may be suspect, and even if she discounts the significance of Jews themselves as a voting bloc.

And that brings us to the larger point. Although individual Jews may continue to play a big role as donors to and fundraisers for political campaigns, Jewish voters, far from exercising a disproportionate influence, are increasingly less important to the outcome of elections in this country, and hence to the politicians vying for office.† That this is so can be confirmed by a glance at the attention being paid to another, emerging group in American politics—namely, American Arabs.

Like American Jews, Arab-Americans, who number approximately 4 million, are concentrated in key

* "Are American Jews Moving to the Right?," April 2000.

† The Jewish role in fundraising may also be in for a decline, especially if campaign-finance reform—ironically, a favorite cause of Jewish liberals—is passed.

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electoral-college states, including New York, New Jersey, and Michigan. Unlike American Jews, however, Arab-Americans have demonstrated a willingness and an ability to swing from one party to the other in pursuit of their political interests. It is thus by no means an accident that Arab-Americans were courted assiduously by *both* Bush and Gore in the course of the 2000 election campaign, with Bush even making an explicit bow to them during one of the prime-time televised debates.

Though the Arab-American vote broke for Clinton in 1996 by a margin of 52 to 32 percent, things were different this past November. Facing, on the Democratic line, a Jewish vice-presidential candidate, and, on the Republican line, a presidential candidate who might plausibly be perceived as friendly to Arab interests, many Arab-Americans shifted allegiances and voted for Bush. In the end, exit polls showed that among Arab voters, Bush beat Gore by a margin of 46 to 38 percent.

While the Arab-American vote cannot be said to have helped elect George W. Bush—Gore won handily in New Jersey and New York and managed to eke out a narrow victory in Michigan—it is clear that Arab-American voters increasingly occupy a place on the political map that will ensure them the careful solicitude of both parties. This stands in sharp contrast to the increasingly marginal position of American Jews, a group that both parties may conclude can more or less be safely ignored—the Democrats because they know the Jews are securely in their pocket and the Republicans for the same reason.

Music

Mendelssohn the Master

Terry Teachout

Was Felix Mendelssohn a great composer? On its face, the question seems absurd. One of the most gifted child prodigies in the history of music, he produced his first masterpiece at the age of sixteen. From then on, he was recognized, first in Germany and then throughout the West, as an artist of near-Mozartean abilities, and not only as a composer but also as a pianist and conductor.

But Mendelssohn's enduring popularity has often been at odds—sometimes quite sharply—with his critical standing. Despite general acknowledgement of his genius, there has been a noticeable reluctance to rank him with, say, Schumann or Brahms. Some critics have explicitly claimed that the composer of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture and the E-Minor Violin Concerto was (in the words of B.H. Haggin) a "minor master . . . working on a small scale of emotion and texture." A few have gone further still: George Bernard Shaw, for example, attacked what he called Mendelssohn's "kid-glove gentility, his conventional sentimentality, and his despicable oratorio-mongering."

While the distinction between "major" and "minor" masters is far from meaningless, the latter term is usually reserved for miniaturists like Johann Strauss or Percy Grainger. Can Mendelssohn, who worked successfully in all the large-scale forms except opera, properly be called minor? Is there some underlying defect in his music, or, in denying him true greatness, have his critics been influenced by nonmusical factors? An insightful short biography by Peter Mercer-Taylor, the newest addition to the excellent *Musical Lives* series published by Cambridge University Press, suggests an answer.*

Mendelssohn was born in Hamburg in 1809, the eldest son of a well-to-do merchant banker who was himself the son of Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), the Jewish philosopher and advocate of

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* *The Life of Mendelssohn*. Cambridge, 238 pp., $17.95 (paper).

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religious tolerance who sought to reconcile faith with Enlightenment rationalism. Felix and his three siblings, baptized into Protestantism in 1816 and given the surname "Bartholdy," were all tutored privately and expected to excel; but Felix's accomplishments were remarkable by any possible standard.

By the time he was fifteen, he had written a violin sonata, three piano quartets, four concertos, twelve symphonies for string orchestra, and dozens of other pieces. As adept with words as with music, he met and befriended Goethe at the unlikely age of twelve, by which time he had already embarked on what ultimately became a vast correspondence (some 5,000 of his letters have survived). In addition to German, he spoke English, Greek, French, Italian, and Latin, and painted uninspired but technically competent landscapes in his spare time.

Though Mendelssohn's student works were accomplished far beyond his young years, it was the E-Flat Octet for Strings, Op. 20 (1825), that constituted a truly astonishing step forward for the sixteen-year-old composer.* Like much of his later music, it is traditional, even conservative, in form, but idiosyncratic in concept and content: a four-movement classical symphony scored for a double string quartet (four violins, two violas, and two cellos), climaxing in a high-speed finale whose first subject is an eight-part fugue. The unorthodox instrumentation is deployed with dazzling ingenuity, while the feathery, mysterious sound of the gossamer-light scherzo would become a Mendelssohn trademark.

This movement, inspired by a stanza from Goethe's *Faust*,* marked the first of many occasions when the composer would seek to translate literature into the abstract language of instrumental music. Fanny Mendelssohn, Felix's older sister and confidante, described it as follows:

> [T]he whole [movement] is to be played staccato and pianissimo, the tremolandos coming in now and then, the trills passing away with the quickness of lightning; everything new and strange, and at the same time most insinuating and pleasing, one feels so near the world of spirits, carried away in the air, half inclined to snatch up a broomstick and follow the aerial procession.

Not only is the Octet fully mature, but no other classical prodigy, not even Mozart or Schubert, produced so characteristic a large-scale work at so early an age. It was a hard act to follow, let alone to top. But Mendelssohn succeeded in doing so with the Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Op. 21, composed the following year. Once again, he used a conventional structure (sonata-allegro form) to give shape to an unusual concept: a programmatic overture depicting the characters and atmosphere of Shakespeare's play. It was the first such work ever written, and once again the result was entirely individual, at once elegant and exhilarating.

HAVING COMPOSED two masterpieces by the age of seventeen, Mendelssohn turned to the task of making a name for himself in the concert hall. In 1829, he led the first modern performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* in Berlin, an event that revived interest in Bach's hitherto-forgotten choral music and established Mendelssohn as a conductor of significance. He then spent the next few years touring Europe, winning renown, especially in England, as a virtuoso pianist and recounting his adventures in dozens of irresistibly readable letters home.

Wherever Mendelssohn went, he wrote music, and his compositions reflected all that he saw—and heard. Indeed, his deeply informed interest in older musical styles foreshadows the neoclassicism of such 20th-century composers as Igor Stravinsky. Fascinated by Bach's contrapuntal mastery, he produced a substantial body of choral music in the baroque style; at the same time, he turned out string quartets and piano sonatas modeled after Beethoven. Yet he remained open to the romantic spirit of his time, though his own impulses in this direction were invariably expressed with the precision and economy of means of a natural-born classicist.

Nowhere is this tension more fruitful than in the *Hebrides* Overture, Op. 26 (1829), a portrait of the Scottish seascape that is both passionate and finely wrought. On the same day that Mendelssohn made the stormy crossing to the Isle of Mull, he wrote a letter to his family that began as follows: "In order to make clear to you the extraordinary effect the Hebrides have had on me, the following occurred to me there." Then come 21 bars of music—apparently conceived on the spot and written down in short score immediately afterward—that would become the opening section of a piece as vividly evocative of the Hebrides Islands as the *Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture is of Shakespeare's play, or the *Italian* Symphony in A Major, Op. 90 (1833), of the sun-drenched landscapes of southern Italy.

To listen to these works is to be put in mind of a remark Mendelssohn made thirteen years later: "The thoughts which are expressed to me by music that I love are not too indefinite to be put into words, but on the contrary, too *definite*." Here we encounter the true classicist, sure of the self-sufficiency of the language of music even when using that language to illustrate the world of nature and ideas.

FOR ALL Mendelssohn's youthful wanderlust, he seems never to have felt seriously tempted to settle abroad. "The French say I am *cosmopolite*," he wrote to his family from Paris. "Heaven defend me from being anything of the kind!" For him, Ger-

*Recommended recordings of the Octet and other key works by Mendelssohn are listed in the selected discography at the end of this piece.

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many was "the land of artists," and he longed to help shape its musical life.

Then as now, it was difficult for a young composer to make a living solely by writing music. Uninterested in pursuing the irregular life of a peripatetic piano virtuoso, Mendelssohn instead chose to become music director of the city of Düsseldorf (1833-35), then conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra (1835-47), where he led the world premiere of Schubert's C-Major Symphony and introduced the music of Handel and Schumann to German audiences. He also appeared frequently in Berlin and London, and played a major role in organizing the Leipzig Conservatory.

These posts were not sinecures, nor did Mendelssohn view them solely as more or less agreeable ways of earning money. An idealist to the core, he was committed to deprovincializing German musical life, and under his astute and innovative leadership, as Peter Mercer-Taylor relates, he turned the Gewandhaus into a prototype of the modern symphony orchestra:

> Where the Gewandhaus Orchestra had formerly been led by the concertmaster, Mendelssohn now directed with the baton, adumbrating through the sheer clarity of his musical vision the *auteur* status of the modern conductor. . . . And while he vigorously sought out and programmed worthy new creations, the Gewandhaus concerts of those years consolidated a repertory—the concept of which we take fully for granted today—centered around a fixed, stable canon of German masterworks.

Though his work as a conductor and administrator won Mendelssohn well-deserved acclaim, it inevitably distracted him from the task of composition. To be sure, it was in Leipzig that he wrote such cornerstones of the classical repertoire as the D-Minor Piano Trio, Op. 49 (1839), the *Scottish* Symphony in A Minor, Op. 56 (1842), and the E-Minor Violin Concerto, Op. 64 (1844). It was there, too, that he composed many of the *Songs Without Words*, those engaging character pieces still beloved of talented amateur pianists the world over. But duty took its toll, and his output became significantly less consistent in quality and inspiration.

More ominously, he began as early as 1839 to fall victim to inexplicable illnesses (including partial deafness and severe attacks of depression) that were no doubt exacerbated by the stress of his professional life. He knew something had to give:

> I believe the time is approaching—or perhaps is already here—when I shall put all this kind of regular, public performance of music on the shelf, in order to make my own music at home, to compose and let this existence continue, as best it may, without me.

In time, Mendelssohn succeeded in cutting back on his performing commitments, freeing him to compose *Elijah*, Op. 70 (1846), a biblical oratorio inspired by his Düsseldorf and Leipzig performances of the oratorios of Handel. Premiered under the composer's baton at England's Birmingham Music Festival, *Elijah* was an instantaneous success, meeting with the wholehearted approval of the music-loving Queen Victoria (to whom he had previously dedicated the *Scottish* Symphony).

In May 1847, less than a month after Mendelssohn conducted *Elijah* in London, his sister Fanny died suddenly. Already drained by his unremitting labors, Felix was devastated by the news; his final composition, the Sixth String Quartet in F Minor, Op. 80, was intended as a requiem for her. A few weeks after finishing it, he suffered the first of a series of strokes, the last of which killed him on November 4, four months shy of his thirty-eighth birthday. Buried in Berlin, he was mourned at services held in Leipzig, London, New York, Paris, and Vienna.

As the widespread sorrow at Mendelssohn's death suggests, *Elijah* was far from a purely German triumph: it also put a seal on his reputation as England's best-loved composer, and as an emblematic figure of the Victorian era. But as the 19th century gave way to the 20th, so did Mendelssohn's close identification with Victorian musical life start to undermine his reputation. Shaw's tart reference to his "oratorio-mongering" was a clear indication of this sea change in sensibility; to the generation that followed, earnest biblical oratorios were less appealing still.

But the decline in Mendelssohn's reputation went beyond mere hostility to oratorios and all they implied. The second half of the 19th century had also seen a fundamental shift in the very idea of greatness in music. By contrast with the grandiose "profundity" of Richard Wagner, the clear-eyed classicism of a Mendelssohn began to seem emotionally detached—even shallow.

Wagner himself wrote scathingly, and notoriously, about Mendelssohn's music, and his criticisms were rooted in his anti-Semitism. Mendelssohn's Jewishness, Wagner argued in his 1850 essay *On Judaism in Music*, rendered him incapable of expressing the true German spirit. As Peter Mercer-Taylor writes:

> In Wagner's formulation, it is finally to Mendelssohn's Jewish heritage that we must ascribe the fact that "he was not able, even one single time, to call forth in us that deep, that heart-searching effect which we await from art. . . ." Thus began a tradition of anti-Semitic criticism in Germany that culminated, under the Nazis, in Mendelssohn's total erasure from the history of his country's music. In 1937, the statue of Mendelssohn that stood before the Gewandhaus was taken down and sold as scrap iron.

All this would have mystified Mendelssohn himself, who not only remained a devout and practicing

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Christian his whole life long but was wholly committed to German nationalism—not least in music. It is, indeed, a grotesque irony that a composer who devoted so much of his life to the consolidation of the German classical-music tradition should have become the object of abuse as a "cosmopolitan" after his death. And no less ironic is the fact that, long after Wagnerian anti-Semitism was consigned to the dustbin of history by Germany's defeat in World War II, the central premise of Wagner's assault on Mendelssohn should continue to be accepted by critics who would never dream of associating themselves with the racist ravings of *On Judaism in Music*. Such, however, is the case. While no one now supposes that Mendelssohn was incapable of profundity because he was Jewish, it is still widely thought that his music is insufficiently profound to be considered truly great.

Mercer-Taylor sheds no light on how or when Wagner's criticisms began to float free of their original context (though it seems likely that Shaw, one of Wagner's most assiduous advocates during his years as a music critic, was at least partly responsible). But echoes of the Wagnerian "line"—which is, not to put too fine a point on it, that Mendelssohn was a lesser composer because he did not write music in the manner of Wagner—continue to be heard, especially from German-born commentators. One finds them, for instance, in the work of the great Mendelssohn biographer Eric Werner, who in 1959 wrote of the youthful A Minor Quartet, Op. 13: "[H]ad Mendelssohn been able to maintain the level of this quartet, his name would stand in close proximity to that of a Mozart or Beethoven!" Such assessments, Mercer-Taylor devastatingly retorts, are "based on two simple measures: the prevalence of unifying devices and a piece's harmonic resemblance to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*."

BUT *was* Mendelssohn, after all, one of the elect, or a charming minor master who occasionally touched the superlative?

It cannot be denied that his music is uneven in quality (a trait he shares with many great composers). *Elijah*, though rather better than Shaw thought, remains an especially problematic piece, "Victorian" in its enervating sentimentality and lack of dramatic force. Like many of his other second-tier efforts—ranging from the banal *Reformation* Symphony, Op. 107, to some of the more insipid entries in *Songs Without Words*—it can strike modern ears as strangely prim.

Small wonder, then, that the Victorians adored *Elijah* and ignored the Sixth Quartet, a work of unprecedentedly wrenching ferocity and anguish which, coming as it did at the very end of Mendelssohn's too-short life, adds weight to the judicious words of the English musicologist Sir Donald Francis Tovey:

> Perhaps, in the violent reaction against the worship he received during his life and after his early death, it has been too readily assumed that he had expressed all that was in him. Gluck, Handel, Haydn, Wagner, and Verdi—none of these would have been particularly great names to us if we possessed only the works they had written before they reached the age at which Mendelssohn died.

It is, of course, impossible to know how Mendelssohn might have developed had he lived longer, though the Sixth Quartet offers a clue. At the same time, it is not necessary to indulge in speculation in order to appreciate the unique qualities of his strongest work. For those who judge all music by the directness of its resemblance to Beethoven's late quartets (which Mendelssohn, as it happens, admired extravagantly), not to mention the last act of *Tristan*, the composer of the *Italian* Symphony is bound to come up short. But listeners whose sensibilities have been shaped under the aspect of modernity need no reminding that Wagnerian romanticism is not the only road to immortality.

Rather than criticizing Mendelssohn's masterpieces for what they do not say, then, it makes far better sense to reflect on what they *do* say, and how they say it. They display, in fact, tremendous expressive range, from the fizzing high spirits of the Octet to the controlled but intense yearning of the *Scottish* Symphony. Sometimes they are lyrical, sometimes hauntingly pensive, sometimes ingeniously witty. Always they are subtly and exquisitely crafted, generously repaying close scrutiny and repeated listening. All of which is by way of suggesting that they are the work of an inconsistent but nonetheless indisputably major master, who at his not-infrequent best was one of the greatest and most satisfying composers who ever lived.

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Mendelssohn on CD: A Select Discography

Most of the great conductors, soloists, and chamber ensembles of the 20th century made recordings of Felix Mendelssohn's best-known works. Here, chronologically, are ten of the finest:

1927: Two years after the introduction of electrical recording, the violinist Jacques Thibaud, the cellist Pablo Casals, and the pianist Alfred Cortot, classical music's first all-star group, recorded the D-Minor Trio. Three-quarters of a century later, their powerfully personal interpretation remains the best available version (Biddulph LHW 002).

1930: The Polish pianist Ignaz Friedman recorded nine *Songs Without Words* on 78's, and these mercurial performances, available as part of Friedman's volume in the *Great Pianists of the 20th Century* series, are among the most precious examples of Golden Age pianism ever committed to disc (Philips 456 784-2PM2, two CD's).

1935: Of all the many memorable recordings of the *Italian* Symphony, the one by Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony deserves special mention for its bracing combination of high spirits and refined execution (Pearl GEMM CD 9037).

1941: Arturo Toscanini adored Mendelssohn's overture and incidental music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the brilliantly lucid recording he made with the Philadelphia Orchestra, despite imperfect 78-era sound (and a king-sized bobble from horn soloist Mason Jones at the end of the nocturne), is an invaluable souvenir of the maestro's brief association with Leopold Stokowski's orchestra (RCA Victor Gold Seal 60314-2-RG). Also of interest is Benno Moiseiwitsch's bewitching 1939 performance of Sergei Rachmaninoff's solo piano arrangement of the scherzo, recorded—incredibly—without rehearsal and in a single, unspliced take. This touchstone of transcendental virtuosity is available as part of the Moiseiwitsch volume in the *Great Pianists of the 20th Century* series (Philips 456 907-2PM2, two CD's).

1960: The best recorded performance of the *Scottish* Symphony is by Peter Maag and the London Symphony, handsomely and sensitively played and finely reproduced in early stereo sound (London 289 466 990-2DM).

1961: Virtually every great violinist since Fritz Kreisler has done the E-Minor Violin Concerto, and many of these recordings—including those of Jascha Heifetz, Isaac Stern, Joseph Szigeti, and Kreisler himself—have long since achieved classic status. But Nathan Milstein's lean, lithe second recording, with Leon Barzin and the Philharmonia Orchestra, is especially noteworthy for its aristocratic poise (Classics for Pleasure 4374).

1965: The Octet for Strings has also been recorded many times, perhaps most engagingly by the Marlboro Festival Ensemble, an all-star group including the violinists Alexander Schneider and Jaime Laredo, plus the four members of what would shortly become the Guarneri Quartet (Sony Classical SMK 46251). A radically different approach to this warm and expansive interpretation can be heard in the tauter, faster, more explicitly virtuosic recording made in 1961 by another all-star group of string players including Heifetz, the violist William Primrose, and the cellist Gregor Piatigorsky (RCA Victor Gold Seal 09026-61766-2).

1971: Benjamin Britten, the 20th century's greatest composer-conductor, performed the *Hebrides* Overture with the English Chamber Orchestra at the 1971 Aldeburgh Festival, and a BBC radio broadcast of this live performance, now available on CD, is electrifyingly bold—one of Britten's finest recorded performances of 19th-century music as well as a fascinating reminder of his own extreme receptivity to English seascape (BBC BBCB 8008-2).

1974: Murray Perahia's rendition of the Piano Concerto No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 25, with Sir Neville Marriner and the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, has a youthful brio ideally suited to this spectacular display piece (Sony Classical MK 42401). This CD also contains a 1982 recording by Perahia of the Rondo Capriccioso, Op. 14, Mendelssohn's most perfect work for solo piano.

1988: The Lindsays (as England's Lindsay String Quartet now bills itself) give an exceptionally fine live performance of the rarely recorded Sixth Quartet (ASV Quicksilver CD QS 6173).

All of the CD's listed here can be purchased online by viewing this article on Commentary's website: www.commentarymagazine.com

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Books in Review

Cut and Paste

A Life in the Twentieth Century: Innocent Beginnings, 1917-1950
by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.
Houghton Mifflin. 523 pp. $27.00

Reviewed by
Robert Kagan

ARTHUR M. Schlesinger, Jr.'s autobiography covers only the first 33 years of his life, but they were a very full 33 years. A distinguished American historian and the son of another distinguished American historian, Schlesinger, born in 1917, was an intellectual prodigy who published his first book when he was only twenty-two; his classic, Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Age of Jackson* (1945) became a bestseller when he was all of twenty-nine. Like many young men of his generation—the generation of the Great Depression and World War II—Schlesinger witnessed much, learned much, and did much in a very short period of time.

As a student, Schlesinger saw Europe in its nervous prewar years. As a young government official, he saw Europe at war. As a young intellectual, he was present at the creation of a new, cold-war America and took part in its earliest personal, political, and ideological struggles—consistently on the liberal anti-Communist side. He worked for and studied under important and interesting men, almost all of them apostles of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal. It was in those years that he became FDR's most avid and perhaps most effective scholarly defender: *The Age of Jackson* was, by his own admission, the product of his desire to find an American historical tradition in which to place the New Deal reforms. By 1950, when this volume of his memoirs ends, Schlesinger was already well on his way to becoming *the* liberal historian of our time.

IN THE hands of this undeniably gifted writer, such raw materials ought to have made for an illuminating and entertaining story. One is a bit puzzled, therefore, by the degree to which *A Life in the Twentieth Century* manages to be neither. Schlesinger accomplishes none of the tasks of an autobiographer: he provides no account of his inner life, tells us little about the lives of others, and casts no new light on the events of his time.

What Schlesinger does provide is lists, some of which go on for pages at a stretch. He meticulously records every book he ever read as a child, and every movie and every theatrical performance he ever saw. He also reproduces his report cards, and descriptions of the prizes he won as a young student. For the years when he was a budding intellectual, Schlesinger gives us capsule versions of his books and articles as well as quotations from reviews and other responses public and private. There are excerpts of correspondence with friends both close and casual, rosters of guests at dinner parties, and, taken from the writings of others, descriptions of himself at various phases of his young life. Throughout, Schlesinger drops names of people he has met: in the

ROBERT KAGAN *is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a contributing editor of the* Weekly Standard.

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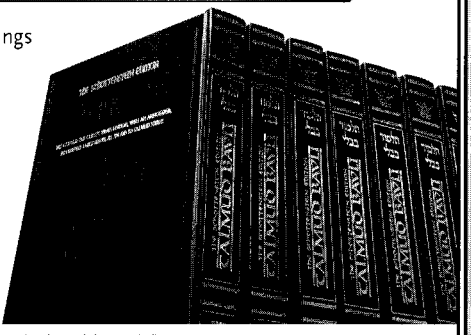

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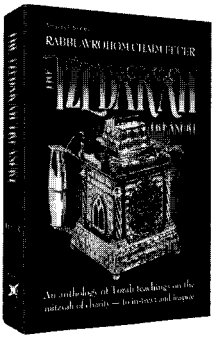

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course of 500 pages, probably well over a thousand of them, many famous and many less so.

To what purpose these endless bits of information have been marshaled is often hard to say. Schlesinger's stabs at cultural criticism are generally quite banal. Who, he asks at one point, "could forget Edward G. Robinson crying, 'Mother of God, is this the end of Rico?' . . . or James Cagney smashing the grapefruit in Mae Clarke's face?" Who, indeed? So common are these Movie Channel highlights that even today's teenagers know them well. About himself, in the meantime, he is incurious to a fault. When a camp counselor reports of the ten-year old Arthur that he was "liked by boys of all ages" but "emotionally . . . a little high-strung," Schlesinger's sole comment is that he "neither especially liked or disliked camp and learned little except swimming and interminable verses of campfire songs," several of which he then proceeds generously to share.

In a foreword, Schlesinger makes it clear that he built up this story from documents, writing as if he did not have access to his own mind and perceptions but could rely only on the written record. ("I have tried in effect to write a biography of myself as if I were writing a biography of someone else.") But in interpreting his life he takes far fewer liberties than he would as a biographer of anyone else. The result is a rather amazing exercise in the avoidance of self-reflection or introspection.

READERS ARE thus left to figure things out for themselves—and it must be said that the pieces Schlesinger has given them do not add up to an especially attractive portrait. Something of a cold fish, Schlesinger writes admiringly but not lovingly of his father, and barely mentions his own children. To read about his friendships, and his romantic interests, is to be struck less by any need to give and receive affection than by the need to know and to be included among the right sort of people, which is to say the Northeastern intellectual, political, and cultural elite.

Indeed, Schlesinger's compulsive name-dropping intrudes in the strangest places. In dance class, he writes, he "looked with distant admiration at pretty Jane Holcombe, the daughter of Arthur N. Holcombe, the political scientist." Another young flame was Alfred North Whitehead's stepdaughter, Sheila Dehn, who (he takes pains to inform us) "later married the historian Myron Gilmore." In introducing his first great love and first wife, Marian Cannon, he tells us right away that her father was Walter Bradford Cannon, "the distinguished physiologist," and that her mother was Cornelia James Cannon, "a novelist and all-purpose reformer." Then, after a one-sentence description of Marian's own virtues and appearance, we learn not only that her older sister was married to "the Sinologist John K. Fairbank" but that her mother, "Radcliffe '99, had attended William James's classes with Gertrude Stein '97, who remained a friend." All in all, one is left with the impression that, for Schlesinger, a woman's most enticing attributes were her lineage and her connections.

Schlesinger's youthful brand of New Deal liberalism hardly got in the way of his elitism. As a precocious teenager, he admired H.L. Mencken, whose "air of worldliness and cosmopolitanism . . . along with contempt for the *booboisie*, made one feel part of a wonderfully sophisticated club." At preparatory school (Exeter), the young Schlesinger wrote an essay in defense of the "Highbrow," a "term of envy . . . applied by yokels, 100-percent Americans, Hoover Republicans, and other dull fellows to those whose perceptions were keener than their own." His father, who had written in a similar spirit about the average American, commented on this es-

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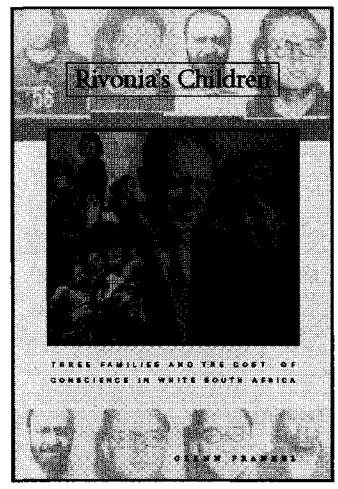

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say, "There is always a little thrill one gets from saying things well."

The eighty-three-year-old Schlesinger offers no retrospective judgment on such early Menckenite effusions. As a matter of politics and theory, the New Deal Democrat detested middle-American "yokels" who voted Republican and favored urban ethnic workers who voted for FDR. But as a matter of personal preference, good family, good breeding, the right tastes, and the right opinions meant more.

Which raises the delicate and possibly unanswerable question of whether Schlesinger's eagerness to play his part in America's white Anglo-Saxon Protestant elite was affected in any way by his own mixed lineage. Bernhard Schlesinger, Arthur's grandfather, was a Jew from East Prussia who emigrated to the United States in 1860, married a Catholic, and then converted to Protestantism. Although (as one amusing anecdote about a forgetful grandmother attests) the young Schlesinger was hardly oblivious to the fact of his ancestry, there are times in reading this memoir when one wonders whether he had actually succeeded in suppressing its implications for his own experience of life or was simply reluctant to think about them.

For example: at age seventeen, he recalls, he traveled to Nazi Germany, where he records having seen a sign reading *Juden kein Eintritt* ("No Jews allowed")—but also having written in his diary, "I found Germany very pleasant." Later on, he raises the issue of whether he and his colleagues working in the research-and-analysis branch of the OSS during World War II should have known that Hitler was carrying out the Final Solution right under their noses; he concludes that, like many government officials and many American Jews, he simply could not believe what the mounting evidence showed.

What is interesting is not this conclusion, which is fair enough, but the bitterness with which the mature Schlesinger now castigates those who in later years insisted that more could have and should have been done on behalf of the European Jews. Abandoning his normally dispassionate tone, Schlesinger lashes out at these "blame-lovers of the 90's" who "condemned their parents and grandparents for standing aside in the 40's" and who then "became virulent critics of Franklin D. Roosevelt and accused him of betraying the Jews." (It is hard to know which of these perfidies—the blaming of par-

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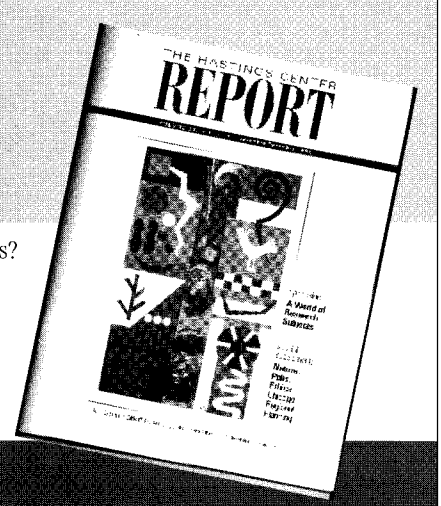

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Those "Palestinian Refugees"

Who are they, what is the real story?

One of the sticking points in the off/on negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians is that of the so-called "refugees", the children and mostly grandchildren of those who left Israel during the 1948 War of Independence. Yasser Arafat insists that there can be no peace unless those "refugees" are allowed to "return" to Israel.

What are the facts?

650,000 "refugees" swell to 5 million. You have heard about those "Palestinian refugees", who claim "right of return" to Israel. Of course, virtually none of them ever lived in Israel -- they are the children and mostly grandchildren of those who fled in 1948. The total number of those who fled in 1948 is estimated to have been about 650,000. Now the number who wish to return has swollen to almost five million!

How did this exodus come about? In 1948, on the day of the proclamation of the State of Israel, five Arab armies invaded the new country from all sides. In frightful radio broadcasts, they urged the Arabs living there to leave, so that the invading armies could operate without interference. They could return after the expected quick victory in that "holy war", get their property back -- *and* that of the Jews. Things turned out differently. The invading armies were defeated. Those who had left became refugees -- people without a country. Those who stayed, and their children, are full-fledged citizens of the state of Israel.

> The Arabs are committed not to allow any "non-believers" to be in control of any part of the Middle East. That is the real cause of the "Palestinian refugee problem".

These so-called "Palestinian refugees" have not been allowed to settle in the "indivisible Arab nation". They have been supported in camps since 1948. So far, close to $1.8 billion has been spent on their maintenance. No end is in sight. Who pays for that? You guessed it: Through UNWRA Relief, the United States contributes more than 60% of the total cost.

The Arab countries, among them some of the richest in the world who fritter away their enormous fortunes on undreamed luxuries, are satisfied to leave their Arab brethren in those miserable camps. They have never contributed a penny to their maintenance.

Another side of the "refugee" story. But there is another side to the "refugee" story. Little is heard of the 800,000 Jewish refugees from Arab countries, who fled those countries to settle in the newly formed Jewish State of Israel. Every one of those refugees was immediately accepted, resettled, taken care of, and given full citizenship by the fledgling, impoverished, and embattled Jewish State. There never has been, and there certainly is not now, a Jewish "refugee" camp in Israel or anywhere else.

The Arab "refugees" who fled Israel left little wealth and little history, since most of them had not come to "Palestine" until Jewish settlers opened economic opportunities in what had been a desolate country for centuries. But the Jews of Arab lands have a history going back thousands of years. When forced to flee, they left behind land, wealth, and a long history. They arrived in Israel, quite literally only "with their shirts on their backs." They now make up almost 60% of the vibrant and productive population of Israel. What have the Arabs, the richest people in the world, done with their "refugees" in more than 50 years? They have kept them in misery, on the dole of the world, and have taught their hopeless youth the "skills" of suicide missions and of slaughtering defenseless and unarmed men, women, and children.

If the Arab nations truly decided to make peace with Israel and to put an end to the century-long strife, they could easily accomplish it by accepting the "Palestinian refugees" in their countries and, just as Israel did with Jewish refugees from Arab countries, integrating them into their societies and making useful citizens of them. In fact, acceptance in their countries might also be offered to the Israeli Arabs, who, despite enjoying a higher standard of living, education, and health than Arabs in any of the surrounding countries and despite having the same civil rights as Israeli Jews, are not happy to live in a Jewish state.

Population transfers are common, especially in the wake of wars. They have been practiced throughout history. In 1923, Greece and Turkey agreed to the resettlement of 2 million Greeks and 800,000 Turks; in 1945, the resettlement of 3 million Germans from Poland and Czechoslovakia was arranged. Following the collapse of its North African empire, France accepted close to 1.5 million people. More than 12 million (!) Muslims and Hindus were exchanged between India and Pakistan. Israel has recognized this historical necessity. The "Arab Nation", with its enormous wealth and vast underpopulated lands, has stubbornly refused to face facts.

It is clear that the "Palestinian refugee problem" is a red herring, kept alive by the Arab nations for their political purposes, and with cynical disregard for the great number of impoverished people who live in these camps. It is being kept alive and is being used as a "non-negotiable" bargaining chip, for the purpose of destroying the State of Israel -- a feat that the Arabs have attempted several times by military means, but which has always ended in disastrous failure. Apart from the unsolvable social problems it would create, the introduction of, say, even one-half of the 5 million who claim to be "refugees" would, with one stroke, dramatically alter the demographic makeup of the country and would inevitably destroy the Jewish State. That is of course the whole idea behind the demand for the "return of the refugees". If the Arab nations were willing to solve the "refugee problem", the legitimacy of Israel could no longer be questioned. But that is not acceptable to the Arabs. They are firmly committed not to allow Israel or any "non-believers" to be in control of any part of the Middle East. It is that, and that alone, which is the real cause of the "Palestinian refugee problem".

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ents and grandparents or the maligning of FDR—upsets him the more.)

Nor is this the end of his ire. Some American Jews, Schlesinger charges, have "very likely" kicked up a fuss about the Holocaust for their own narrow purposes, in response to the "decline of anti-Semitism and the rise of intermarriage in the United States." "One wonders," he remarks conspiratorially, "why this controversy suddenly exploded so many years after the fact." One wonders more, however, about what has gotten the historian so worked up.

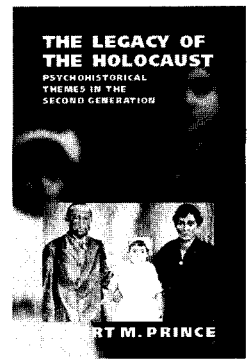
Anger of this kind rarely appears in Schlesinger's book. But one can also detect it in his snarling references to American conservatives, then and now. A stolid anti-Communist, Schlesinger nevertheless clearly prefers the leftists and Communists he knew and went to school with to the conservatives he imagined lying out in the American wasteland in the 1930's and 40's or those he would later meet in ideological battle in the 1970's and 80's. The "yokels" of early-20th-century rural America, he writes, had dug in "for a rearguard stand to save morality, patriotism, Prohibition, white supremacy, and the old-time religion ('traditional values,' later generations would say) from the Catholics, radicals, wets, atheists, labor organizers, pacifists, Negroes, and foreigners." The Ku Klux Klan, he adds, and "the monkey trial in Tennessee (the courtroom filled, Mencken wrote, with 'gaping primates'), were harbingers of things to come." From the Klan and the Scopes trial to William J. Bennett: for Schlesinger, the line is unbroken.

Schlesinger would have us believe, in fact, that American conservatives, in the guise of American businessmen, were as much a threat to the nation's well-being as the Communists who ferreted secrets back to Moscow, for in their greed these businessmen would have destroyed the nation that let them prosper. Only the far-seeing, big-government liberalism of Franklin D. Roosevelt saved us from near-catastrophe then, but for the rest of the century the danger continued unabated. To rescue democracy, the "advocates of the affirmative state had to fight conservatism at every step along the way."

Schlesinger will no doubt expand on this argument in future volumes, where he will explain how it was the liberals who won the cold war by beating back the likes of Eisenhower, Reagan, and Newt Gingrich. For the purposes of this volume, one can only marvel at the Manichean narrowness of his vision. For a historian who believes that the essence and grandeur of American democracy lie in political conflict, it is remarkable how often Schlesinger feels compelled to attack the very legitimacy of the side he opposes. At one point, "in the interests of full disclosure," he does record a critical comment about himself by Theodore White, to the effect that in his later years Schlesinger "developed a certainty about affairs, a public tartness of manner associated with the general liberal rigidity of the late 60's." In an autobiography so lacking in self-reflection, perhaps that is all the acknowledgment one can ask for.

It is, at any rate, a good deal more than most of his reviewers have asked for. To one of them, a respected historian in his own right, this cut-and-paste volume compares favorably with *The Education of Henry Adams*, while another, alluding to the fictional masterpieces of Anthony Powell, hailed it as "a historian's dance to the music of time." (In his own paean to Schlesinger in the *New Republic*, the historian Sean Wilentz did at least feel compelled to stipulate that *A Life in the Twentieth Century* is "oddly lacking in literary merit.")

Such exaggerations are bizarre even by the normal standards of fawning reviews. But undiscriminating accolades by colleagues are no doubt one of the benefits of membership in that "wonderfully sophisticated club" Schlesinger has belonged to all his life.



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Wedding-Bell Blues

Public Vows:
A History of Marriage
and the Nation
by Nancy F. Cott
Harvard. 288 pp. $27.95

Reviewed by
Kay S. Hymowitz

IT IS not exactly news that the institution of marriage has suffered in the U.S. over the last several decades. "Living together" has become commonplace, almost half of those who do marry end up divorced, and single women think nothing of having babies on their own. What has been less remarked upon, however, is that despite these disturbing changes, matrimony has retained a powerful hold on the American imagination—and not just for traditionalists. Homosexuals have pressed ever more insistently in recent years for inclusion in the national wedding celebration, and even so inveterate a critic of marriage as *Ms.* founder Gloria Steinem—who once opined that "a woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle"—succumbed this past summer to the old-fashioned promise of marital bliss.

For Nancy Cott, a professor of history and American studies at Yale, the continuing allure of marriage in the U.S. is no accident. Rather, as she argues in often illuminating detail, it is in large part a consequence of the role that matrimony has long played in our self-understanding as a people and our development as a nation. In their abiding determination to wed, contemporary Americans, she suggests, are affirming nothing so much as their commitment to principles with deep roots in the country's past.

AMERICA'S FOUNDERS, Cott shows, were not just concerned with the narrowly legal and constitutional side of establishing a modern republic. Their ambitious project had a social dimension as well, a prime expression of which was their "political theory of marriage."

As they saw it, just as American citizens would be self-governing in the political realm, so too should young people be free to choose their own mates, consent being, in the words of the statesman James Wilson of Pennsylvania, "the essence of every rational contract." It was thought that such voluntary unions between two equals, especially when formalized by public authority, would help to inculcate habits of independence and self-sufficiency, and create families in which these virtues would be passed on to the next generation. From freely arranged nuptials would come hardy, freedom-loving citizens.

For most of the country's early history, the task of spreading this republican view of marriage fell to the state governments. Legislatures enacted new laws prohibiting such imperfectly voluntary arrangements as incestuous and polygamous marriages, and making it much easier to divorce. According to Cott, however, such regulations were exceedingly difficult to enforce. In the rural, sparsely populated America of the early 19th century, the personal lives of most citizens were simply outside the reach of public authority; relations between husband and wife were overseen informally by local communities, wielding their considerable powers of surveillance and shame to discourage adultery, cruelty, and other abuses.

Active promotion of the republican model of marriage would have to wait until after the Civil War, when a newly empowered federal government found itself facing sev-

KAY S. HYMOWITZ *is a contributing editor of* City Journal *and the author of* Ready or Not: What Happens When We Treat Children As Small Adults *(recently reissued in paperback).*

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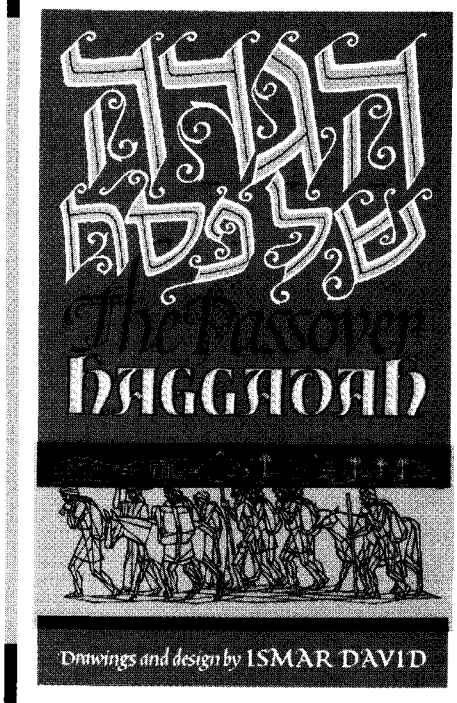

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eral challenges to this ideal. First among these was the problem posed by newly freed Southern blacks, many of whom, for obvious reasons, had only the most informal matrimonial bonds. The Freedmen's Bureau, the federal agency designed to guide the ex-slaves' transition to freedom, not only urged them to wed but even appointed officials to solemnize their marriages, all in the hope of encouraging habits of self-sufficiency.

A still more fundamental affront to national policy came with the mid-19th-century settlement of the Utah territory by the Mormon church, which openly advocated polygamy. Federal troops were dispatched to Utah in 1856 in an attempt, as Congress put it, to normalize "the domestic institutions of the people" living there; but it was only with the rise of the Republican party, which equated "plural marriage" with the master-slave relations of the South, that the government began to throw its full weight behind ending the practice. The issue was finally decided in 1879, when the Supreme Court ruled that the right to religious freedom did not require tolerating the Mormon concept of marriage.

Encouraging American-style marriage soon became a priority as well for the federal agencies overseeing Indian affairs and immigration. New Jewish arrivals were scrutinized because it was feared, largely as a result of prejudices absorbed from reading the Bible, that they were polygamists. Officials also attempted to end the practice among Asian immigrants of marrying "picture" or "proxy" brides, women who were chosen from a book and who took their vows before even setting foot in the U.S.

As Cott emphasizes, there were limits to this policy of marriage based on consent, especially when it came to race. Laws prohibiting intermarriage between whites and Asians were common in the Western states well into the 1930's. As for African-Americans, their full participation in the national ideal of marriage based exclusively on consent did not come about until 1967, when the U.S. Supreme Court, in the aptly named case of *Loving* v. *Virginia*, declared that antimiscegenation laws were unconstitutional.

At the same time, Cott argues, the republican model of marriage has had to come to terms with its own contradictory treatment of women. Though the original advocates of such unions stressed the dignity of American women, and the need to respect their independence, they also accepted the old common-law doctrine of coverture, or marital unity, under which husbands took possession of their wives' assets and had the exclusive right to represent the family publicly. For Cott, the slow dismantling of these privileges in the course of the 20th century, in everything from legal standing to the provision of Social Security benefits, represents a final triumph of principles dating back to the country's founding moment.

To Nancy Cott's credit, *Public Vows* provides a fascinating lens through which to view our history. Though Americans tend to think of marriage as the most private of institutions, it has in fact been shaped decisively by our politics and by changing attitudes toward race, ethnicity, and the role of women. More important perhaps, Cott is undoubtedly correct to trace the ongoing cultural centrality of marriage to its unique embodiment of certain national ideals. Americans long to marry in part because of their fervent commitment to consent, and because they appreciate that public vows endow their choices with a gravity often absent in contemporary life.

But this is only part of the story, and in many respects not the most crucial part. For all their emphasis

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on the place of mutual consent in marriage, Americans have never lost sight of the institution's wider purpose: to safeguard reproduction and child-rearing. The idea of voluntary unions was the local attire worn by a universal human arrangement.

Cott not only fails to give proper attention to this broader view of American marriage, or to the religious institutions that have long blessed and fostered it, but she makes only passing reference to its unhappy fate in recent decades. Since the late 1960's, judges and policy-makers—that is, American government itself—have undermined the special status of marriage as the most suitable environment for raising children. In the 1972 case of *Stanley* v. *Illinois*, to cite just one of many instances that go entirely unmentioned by Cott, the Supreme Court ruled that custody laws favoring wed over unwed fathers were "constitutionally repugnant." In the wake of these changes, we have seen a rising incidence of single parenthood, producing children who are more likely to be poor, academically unsuccessful, and dependent on government support.

For Cott, so central—so sacred—is the idea of consent that it swamps every other consideration, leading her to dismiss those who continue to define marriage in more traditional terms. Thus, the recent Defense of Marriage Act, which sought to head off the legal ratification of gay marriage, draws her criticism for "impos[ing] majority norms of marriage on a minority." That these "majority norms" might be nothing more or less than *human* norms, long reflected in the world's customs and traditions, including our own, is a possibility whose exploration must be left to a less parochial study of marriage in America.

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Doctors' Disease

PC, M.D.:
How Political Correctness Is Corrupting Medicine
by Sally Satel
Basic. 256 pp. $27.00

Reviewed by
Paul R. Gross

SALLY SATEL, a psychiatrist with strong credentials in several areas of public health, including drug addiction and its treatment, boasts additional qualifications rare among her peers. Highly conversant in the ways of Washington, she has made a second career as a practicing journalist, specializing in the fields of health and science and their intersection with public policy. As a writer, she is exceptionally conscientious about doing her homework and presenting opposing views fairly, while also getting quickly and efficiently to the point.

Underlying many of Satel's concerns is one of the least known and most remarkable victories won by the academic orthodoxy known as political correctness, or "PC." Much has been written about this fashionable fixation on victimhood, oppression, and the inescapable trio of race, class, and gender, a fixation that has disfigured the study of most subjects outside the hard sciences in our schools and universities. What this book demonstrates is the extent to which doctrines of political correctness have also moved into and occupied vast regions of the health and health-service professions: medicine, public health, nursing, and social work. Although these doctrines may not yet thoroughly dominate official discourse and policy, they exercise a profound and pernicious influence, to the detriment of science and sound medicine alike.

EVEN READERS who have followed developments in Satel's particular fields of interest are likely to be unpleasantly surprised by the sheer weight and scope of the cases she covers in this book. A long chapter on "Race and Medicine," for example, documents the increased acceptance in medical circles of the idea that what accounts for the differences between black and white Americans in health and health care is, in the words of one distinguished doctor at Bellevue Hospital in New York, "racism, flat out." (In her typically careful way, Satel, after laying out the evidence that allegedly supports this idea, then gives us the hard data refuting it.) Similarly, in "Sisterhood and Medicine," she takes up the widely propagated—and quite false—claim that women are overlooked in clinical trials, while in "Therapy for Victims" she

PAUL R. GROSS *is University professor emeritus of life sciences at the University of Virginia and the co-author of* Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science.

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deals with the emerging focus on social oppression as an analytic concept informing health policy and clinical practices alike. And so forth.

One subject examined in depth in *PC, M.D.* is the "recovered memory" movement. This will be familiar territory to anyone who has followed the breathless accounts, many by disturbed young women acting at the encouragement of their therapists, of supposedly long-repressed incidents of sexual abuse at the hands of male relatives, not to mention the flood of accusations concerning satanic rituals and unmentionable acts of violence being performed upon innocent children by their professional caregivers.

The devastation wrought by the recovered-memory movement has now more or less been acknowledged; with some exceptions, as in Massachusetts where the defendants in the notorious Amirault case still await justice, improper court convictions resulting from it have been overturned, if after the lapse of many years. But what has not been undone is the evil visited upon the accused and their families. Nor—and this is where Satel comes in—is there any understanding of the roots of these latter-day witch trials in theories that to this day continue to be propagated in our schools, colleges, and learned professions.

In still another corner of the medical forest, Satel visits a much less publicized movement that goes by the name of "therapeutic touch" (TT). This hodge-podge of faith healing (via the laying on of hands), New Age ecstasy, prescientific thought, and misapplied terminology from the field of physics is taught and practiced everywhere from our most distinguished medical centers to hospitals in remote parts of the country. It is based, in brief, on the notion that the human body is invested with an "energy field" that can be felt by trained practitioners. By judicious movements of their hands—the "touch" is metaphoric; there is no actual physical contact—these practitioners can reorient the energy field from its existing state of disorganization, supposedly the true cause of an individual's malady, toward a normal, healthy state of alignment.

Not long ago, a documentary about this technique appeared on public television. Although a number of critics were included in the show, the overall emphasis was quite positive, with endorsements coming from, among others, a prominent cardiac surgeon at Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons who testified that he was happy to make TT available to patients undergoing open-heart surgery. Of course, as Satel patiently demonstrates, not only is TT absurd as "theory," but it cannot and does not work: the testimonials may mount by the thousands, but there is still not a single respectable, peer-reviewed clinical trial in which TT has outperformed a placebo.

Nevertheless, TT flourishes nationwide, promulgated in part by a nursing profession that, through the good offices of women's studies and an academic field called the sociology of science, has been brought to a high degree of hostility toward doctors and the "privileged" forms of medical science. As such, it is but one of an array of "alternative" or "complementary" practices that reject the scientifically-based in favor of the intuitive, the "multicultural," or any other form of "knowledge" that has been "marginalized" by the medical "patriarchy."*

At the heart of many of the cases examined by Satel is the "social-production" theory of disease. The core principle of this theory is that physiological failure in individuals is caused not by inherent or behaviorally generated biological processes but by invidious social conditions (as in, "AIDS is a social disease caused by racial and class discrimination"); the same goes for inequalities in states of health and disease among groups. Therefore, the first obligation of public-health professionals, as of the victims of disease themselves, is to fight for social change.

In *PC, M.D.*, Sally Satel does not argue that social conditions and social change are irrelevant to public health and disease. She does argue that the increasingly exclusive emphasis on these factors diverts attention, funds, and support from practical means for the amelioration of suffering. That is disgrace enough. The public-health crises with which we are beset will be overcome not by the waving of political banners but by expert medical treatment, close supervision, changed behaviors, and an honest coming to terms with reality. Toward that end, this book is a thoughtful and authoritative guide.

* For more on alternative medicine in general, see "The New Snake Oil: A Field Guide," by Samuel McCracken, Commentary, June 1999.

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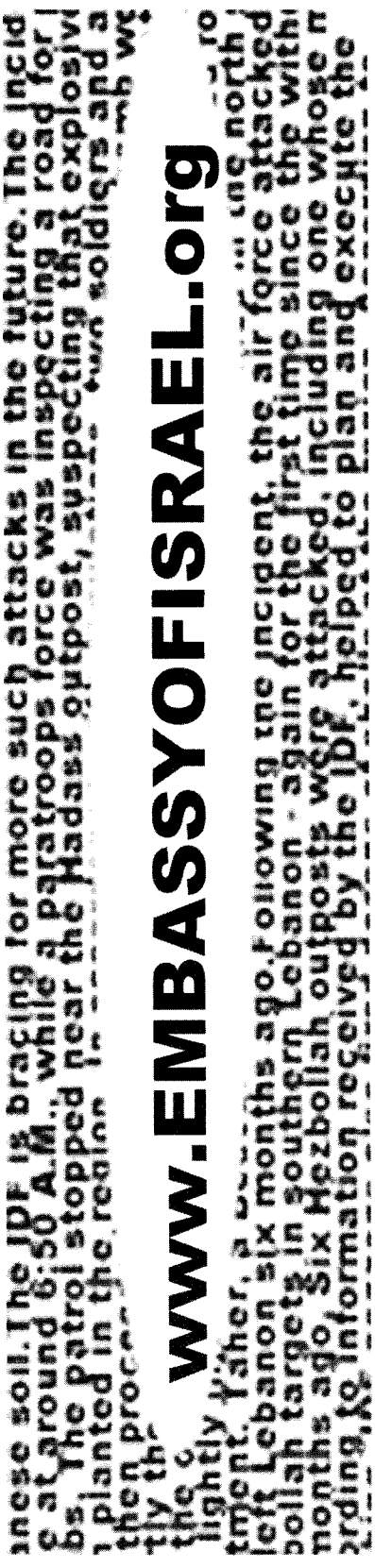

The New Economy I

The Virtue of Prosperity: Finding Values in an Age of Techno-Affluence

by Dinesh D'Souza

Free Press. 284 pp. $26.00

Reviewed by
Eric Cohen

THE OPENING scene of Dinesh D'Souza's new book finds the author at a lavish party in Silicon Valley for the web company Inktomi. As the music blares and guests take turns climbing a faux mountain (the invitation suggested dressing in "whatever you wear to climb to the top"), D'Souza eavesdrops on the animated conversations of the twenty- and thirty-year-olds in attendance. Many are newly minted multimillionaires—one, in fact, is a billionaire—but money, D'Souza recognizes, is just part of what excites them. As one partygoer says of his peers: "They're revolutionaries, man. They are opening the doors to a whole new outlook, a new way of life."

D'Souza agrees. But he wonders what sort of values will inform this "age of techno-affluence." Indeed, for D'Souza—a research scholar at the American Enterprise Institute whose previous books have grappled provocatively with political correctness on college campuses, race, and the Reagan presidency—the moral dimension of this revolution is perhaps the most important. As he sees it, there is no more urgent task ahead for American society than figuring out "what place technology and wealth should occupy in our pursuit of the good life."

THE U.S. economy of recent years has created, D'Souza writes, the first "mass-affluent society" in human history. More than half the population now owns stock—up from just 10 percent twenty years ago—and even the country's poorest citizens are "better housed, better clothed, and better fed than average Americans were half a century ago." Moreover, the technological innovation that has done so much to generate this wealth shows no sign of abating. Through further advances in genetics and other fields, it actually holds out the historic possibility of transforming "our very nature as human beings."

The loudest cheerleaders for this "technocapitalism" are members of what D'Souza calls the "Party of Yeah." These "daring entrepreneurs," "innovators," and "doers" are zealously upbeat about the future, believing that technological progress needs no justification beyond success in the marketplace, and that "if something can be done it should be done." Their ranks comprise high-tech pioneers like Steve Jobs of Apple Computer and Larry Ellison of Oracle; gurus of the "new economy" like the writers James Glassman and George Gilder; and such "techno-utopians" as the scientists Raymond Kurzweil and Lee Silver, who believe, as D'Souza puts it, that "the history of our species [will be] written with the epitaph that we tried out humanity, found it wanting, and opted for something better."

These hard-driving optimists are opposed—in D'Souza's scheme of things—by the "Party of Nah." What unites the members of this disparate group—a partial roster includes the economic doomsayer Robert Schiller, the social-democratic political theorist Michael Walzer, the ecologist Wendell Berry, and conservative scholars like the historian Gertrude Himmelfarb and the philosopher Leon Kass—is their deep-seated anxiety about the future of our technology-dominated world. Whether concerned about social equality, the environment, or traditional values, these critics fear

ERIC COHEN, *a new contributor, is a fellow at the New America Foundation in Washington, D.C.*

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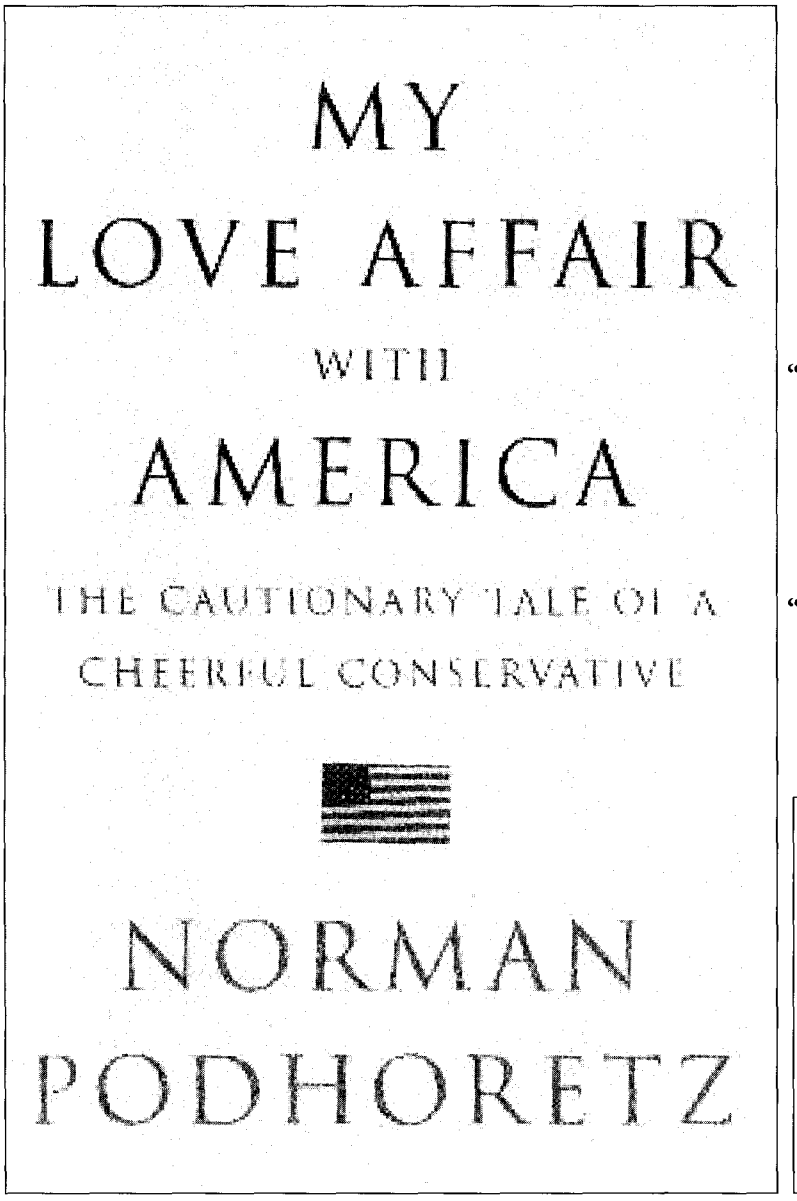

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that, in Kass's words, "we are being led down new paths by people who have no moral sense of what is at stake."

For D'Souza, the looming struggle between the proponents and critics of technocapitalism is no passing phase; rather, it is the culmination of long-standing tensions in Western civilization. Devoted to community, virtue, and beauty, the Party of Nah, he believes, is descended from, among others, Plato, the Bible, the Stoics, and Confucius. The Party of Yeah, by contrast, is the heir of modern thinkers like Hobbes, Bacon, Locke, and the American founders—men who set out to create societies that would be rich and secure rather than noble and pious.

THOUGH D'SOUZA himself is clearly more sympathetic to the Party of Yeah—at one point he calls its opponents a bunch of "whiners" and "losers"—he describes his own goal as finding a way "to help heal the social divisions caused by the new technological capitalism." He wishes to chart a middle course, heeding the wisdom of the past while at the same time taking advantage of the life-enhancing marvels made possible by new technology.

Thus, on the morally fraught question of manipulating human nature itself, D'Souza is quick to reject what he calls the "techno-Nietzschean" effort to create a genetically or cybernetically superior "post-human." Nor, he maintains, should parents be allowed to indulge their whims by engineering "designer" children. At the same time, however, D'Souza looks forward to the day when cloning will be available to couples incapable of having children on their own, and gene therapy will be used to cure birth defects in the womb and perhaps even to improve below-average height and IQ.

Beyond such particulars, D'Souza believes that the Party of Nah, for all its justifiable concern about the loss of community and reverence in our technological world, has overlooked the moral possibilities of the new affluence. Creativity and enterprise, he argues, will provide us with powerful means for protecting the environment; unprecedented wealth will give us the financial resources to rebuild decaying churches and schools; laptop computers, cell phones, and the Internet will allow working parents to stay home with their children. Far from destroying our respect for the deeper things in life, D'Souza suggests, the high-tech economy will give us the leisure we need to explore the very truths proclaimed by the Party of Nah.

The Virtue of Prosperity is an entertaining book, filled with lively argument and reportage and written in a brisk, approachable style. More significantly, D'Souza has raised issues of undeniable importance, particularly in describing the extravagant ambitions of many members of the technological-entrepreneurial class.

Those ambitions, as it turns out, received a rude shock in the period since D'Souza completed his book. With the plunge in the NASDAQ market, high-tech companies that once seemed—and believed themselves to be—invincible have seen their fortunes drama-tically reversed (stock for the web company Inktomi, whose party D'Souza attended in late 1999, has traded of late for as little as $11 a share, having been valued at well over $200 a share less than a year earlier).

If our recent level of techno-affluence is not necessarily here to stay, however, the moral conundrums that it has presented certainly are. It is thus all the more unfortunate that D'Souza's book is so superficial in so many respects. His chatty, even flippant, tone too often undermines his claim to seriousness. And his elaborate intellectual pedigrees for the Parties of Yeah and Nah not only muddle his treatment of present-day issues but border at times on the absurd, with Socrates thrown into the same camp as a bearish Wall Street analyst and Thomas Jefferson cast as the ally of a cyberneticist who wants to transcend "the mere accident of being human."

Nor, contrary to what D'Souza suggests, does it seem the least bit likely that these two "parties" will soon replace our present political alignments; the fact that Greenpeace and the Christian Coalition share some concerns about the excesses of biotechnology companies hardly makes them permanent allies. But then, the real world of politics rarely intrudes upon D'Souza's account. Confident as he is that most of the problems posed by techno-affluence will largely work themselves out in the private choices we make, he seems to believe they require no serious attention from political leaders and no new thinking to replace the ideologies and parties that he declares obsolete. As he writes toward the end of the book, commenting on the then-impending 2000 election, "if the new President changed into his pajamas every afternoon and took a long nap, like Calvin Coolidge, this would probably be good for the market and good for the country."

To say the least, however, it is difficult to reconcile this counsel of political complacency with some of the grave technological dangers so vividly painted by D'Souza himself. Public scrutiny and law-making are, to be sure, no panacea for the darker side of techno-affluence; but, together with the hard moral, scientific, and philosophical reasoning undertaken by skeptics like Leon Kass, they undoubtedly have a role to play in defending the very idea of human nature against those who would so readily sacrifice it to the god of progress.

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The New Economy II

The Future of Success
by Robert B. Reich
Knopf. 275 pp. $26.00

Reviewed by
David Brooks

America has always been a freer and more open society than others—and thus a more meritocratic and demanding one. Not only do we work harder than any other people on the planet—350 more hours a year, on average, than Europeans—but we *like* to work hard. A third of Japanese salarymen say they would be willing to work fewer hours in exchange for less pay, and 38 percent of the industrious Germans say the same thing. Only 8 percent of Americans would take this deal.

In fact, those Americans with the most discretion over how hard they work are precisely the ones who have chosen to work the longest hours. Today, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, workers with just a high-school diploma actually spend fewer hours on the job each week than their counterparts did twenty years ago. During this same period, by contrast, the number of executives and professionals who work at least 50 hours a week has grown by a third, and now includes nearly 40 percent of male—and 20 percent of female—college graduates.

Why are Americans, and especially privileged Americans, so devoted to their jobs? A large, if too often overlooked, part of the answer is simply that we think working hard is virtuous. Since the days of Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards, Americans have been taught that they have two basic callings, one to God and the other to labor, and that material and spiritual rewards are interconnected. Foreign visitors have always remarked upon the atmosphere of almost fevered industry in the U.S.—the tinkering, the building, the baying for money. Even today, despite all that has changed in our society, Americans still embrace Abraham Lincoln's call for an "open field and a fair chance," feeling that the spoils should go to those with talent and drive, to the tired commuters coming back from the airport after midnight or to the farmer up at dawn in his satellite-directed combine.

Of course there have always been those who dissent from this culture of industriousness. The Pilgrim leader William Bradford complained that, among his followers, "No man thought he could live, except he had cattle and a great deal of ground to keep them," and all were "striving to increase their stock." More recently, liberal academics have created something of a cottage industry by churning out books, with titles like *The Overworked American* and *The Time Bind*, that condemn their countrymen for being work-obsessed (so many books, in fact, that one cannot help wishing that the authors would heed their own advice).

And now along comes Robert Reich, the former Secretary of Labor, with a book that tries to borrow something from both camps, celebrating the "new chances and choices" of the emerging economy while at the same time examining what is, to his mind, the dark personal and social underside of our wildly prosperous age.

For its first 100 pages or so, *The Future of Success* is like every other dull book about the revolutionary changes supposedly taking place as a result of the new economy and global capitalism. Reich describes the decline of distance, the increasing importance of education, and the acceleration of just about everything. He even has a chapter on "The Obsolescence of Loyalty," which repeats the well-worn, if empirically dubious, claim that we are all becoming autonomous free agents with no lasting connections to communities or employers.

But in the middle of this somewhat dated account, Reich manages to become interesting. In a section called "The New Life," he tries to convey what it really feels like to live in this rich, fast-moving country, with its manifold opportunities and fulfilling careers, not to mention all those cool gadgets, sleek cars, and luxurious homes. As Reich sees it, in creating this "new life," we have made a Faustian pact, seizing the chance to make unprecedented amounts of money and earn the status that goes with success but forfeiting our balance in the process. "As wondrous as the new economy is," he writes, "we are also losing parts of our lives to it—aspects of our family lives, our friendships, our communities, ourselves." Most worrisome of all is the "growing asymmetry between what the emerging economy offers by way of work, and what children need by way of financial support, care, and attention."

What has induced us to make this rotten trade-off? Reich believes it is the unpredictability of today's world of work. With pay often pegged to company performance or profits, professionals can no longer be certain how much they will earn from one year to the next. Nor can they count on steady advancement, much less lifetime employment, at a particular firm—or even on the continued existence of an industry. Thus, when they see an opportunity to make some extra money, move to a better job, or enhance their personal "brand," they have to grab it. Make hay while the sun shines, they reason, because no one knows what the future will bring.

Reich concludes by calling for a series of reforms to help soften the excesses of the information-age economy. Some of these are familiar elements of the old-style liberal agenda, like legislation guaranteeing jobs to those who lose out under globalization. Others are more novel. Reich proposes, for instance, using insurance to provide workers with a financial cushion should their incomes drop precipitously. He also thinks that

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regions losing 5 percent or more of their economic base in a year should automatically receive a federal subsidy. Still more radically, he would like to see the government spread the ownership of assets—and thus ease the stress of the new economy—by giving every American a $60,000 nest egg on his 18th birthday for investment, paying tuition, or starting a business.

NOW, NOBODY who lives in today's America can doubt that millions of people feel pressed for time. Just in the little klatch of parents to which my wife and I belong, most of the conversations are about the constant pressure to get home from work, take the kids to soccer and baseball practice, arrange playdates, minimize the length of business trips, supervise homework, and so on. But is it correct to charge, as Reich does, that the new economy has created an "asymmetry" in our lives that is ravaging American culture?

One could instead point to the innumerable ways in which the new economy has improved American culture. It has induced more people to work harder than ever before, breathing new life into such estimable bourgeois virtues as industriousness, self-discipline, and civility. It has taken self-indulgent hippies and transformed them into thriving capitalists—out with the bong, in with the spreadsheet. And it has created many more people who rush to explore new careers and technologies, who embrace the open, meritocratic structures that give them this freedom, and who—like, I would guess, Robert Reich—find their work spiritually fulfilling, socially useful, status-enhancing, and surprisingly remunerative.

Indeed, Reich is a peculiar apostle for the idea that Americans should worry less about their careers. The quintessential baby-boomer meritocrat, he has made it to the top on the basis of brains, frantic work, and connections. He rose from middle-class circumstances, went to Harvard, got a Rhodes Scholarship, and then won a post at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. While a young professor, he produced an astonishing number of books, essays, op-eds, and reviews, thus earning the admiration of another striving boomer, Bill Clinton, who named him Secretary of Labor. These days, Reich tells us, he spends more time with his family—but, judging by his still prodigious output, he has hardly slowed down. Listening to him complain about overwork is like getting temperance tips from W.C. Fields.

NOR IS there much evidence that the new souped-up work ethic has led to family breakdown or parental neglect. Information-age parents are ever more deeply involved in their kids lives, and if the survey data from Gallup and Roper are to be believed, the generation gap has rarely been narrower, with whole families listening to the same music and teens reporting good relations with their moms and dads. Moreover, children themselves are now part of the achievement culture, spending much less time watching TV or just hanging around and much more time in school, doing homework, or engaged in adult-supervised sports. There may certainly be an unattractive side to having such super-achieving young people, but one could hardly call them the carriers of cultural decay: is it bad that teenage drug use, suicide, and sexual activity are down, while volunteering is way up?

Robert Reich sees the excesses of the information age and suggests we adopt Swedish-style programs to correct them. That is probably not going to take. The fact is, Americans have every reason to cheer the new economy, which seems tailor-made to the individualism and entrepreneurialism that have long defined us. We Americans asked for this world, and created it in our own image. There are trade-offs, to be sure, as there are under any economy. But on the whole, the deal offered by the new technology is one that only a sucker would turn down.

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Character Education the Right Way

William Damon is a senior fellow, Hoover Institution; director, Stanford Center on Adolescence; and professor of education, Stanford University.

Amid the clamor of our recent presidential contest, the mass media coverage ignored one clear difference between the major candidates. The contrast may seem undramatic, but it could prove to be the most consequential issue of all for the future of our children, which is to say the future of our society. The issue is character education, and the candidate who spoke up for it is our new president. This means that we may anticipate renewed national attention to the fostering of virtue and moral commitment among the young.

The attention will be welcome. Yet it must be accompanied by sound strategy if it is to produce results. **Many areas of education today have been debased by fuzzy thinking, low standards, and a feel-good, anything-goes mentality.** Character education is no exception.

In my visits to schools across the country, I have seen much lip service paid to "good values" and many skin-deep programs that ask students to recite virtuous words such as honesty, temperance, and respect. I also have seen adults promoting the very behaviors that they are supposedly warning children against. I have heard teachers tell students that they don't blame them for cheating on tests that are unfair or meaningless. I have heard of sex education programs that instruct students in the use of contraceptives. I have observed adults who counsel underage minors about alcohol abuse by telling them to stay within a one-drink-per-hour limit.

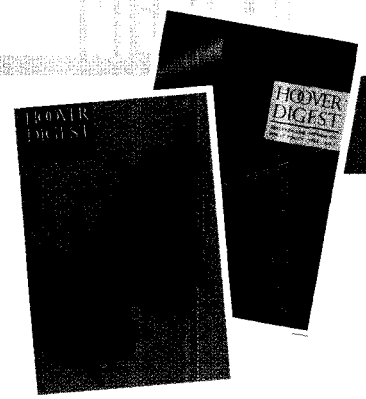
Such ambivalent messages make a mockery out of character education. Children are brilliant at picking up subtexts, and they love to explore the half-forbidden. Any instruction that begins "I'd rather not have you do this, but if you are going to anyway, be sure to…" is an irresistible invitation to give it a full-throttle try. The only way to dissuade a child from harmful behavior is through firm guidance that a child understands and takes seriously. The only way to stop cheating is to tell children that it's wrong, to explain why, and to enforce the sanctions rigorously. The only sex education programs that work—that result in *less* rather than *more* risky sexual activity—are programs that stress abstinence.

Conveying "do nots" to children is key to successful character education, but it is only part of the story. Character education must have a positive side, a call to serve others and to dedicate oneself to a higher purpose. In the long run, **it is a sense of inspiration that will sustain the child's good character, often making the learned prohibitions unnecessary.**

Charitable work is one way to introduce students to a larger purpose. Another is through expressions of religiosity. One great blow against character education in our time has been the virtual banning of religious sentiment from the public schools. In earlier days, schoolbooks and lessons were full of nonsectarian religious ideas, and children benefited from the uplifting values that these ideas conveyed. It is time to open our schools once again to free expressions of faith, the spiritual underpinning of character development.

— *William Damon*

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



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To: The President of the United States

From: The Washington Institute's Presidential Study Group

Re: How to Advance American Interests in the Middle East

"...the top U.S. priority should be to prevent a descent to regional war..."

George W. Bush takes office at a perilous moment in the Middle East. Arab–Israeli relations are in crisis, regional radicals are buoyant, and the popular mood in much of the Arab world is critical of U.S. policy. Overall, the strategic situation of the United States in the area is characterized more by challenges than opportunities. In its final report, the Presidential Study Group—a bipartisan, blue-ribbon commission of statesmen, diplomats, legislators, scholars, journalists, and experts—provides the President with a set of ideas and recommendations for managing this turbulent moment in a way that protects U.S. interests and allies.

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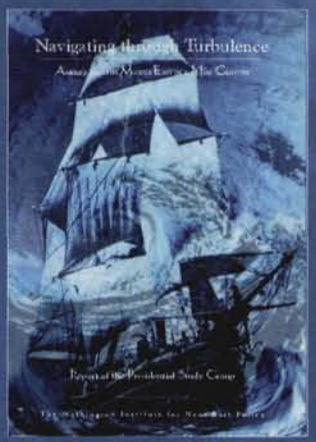

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